Commentary
February 2004

Is Bush a Conservative?
Daniel Casse

The Axis of Evil, Act II
Arthur Waldron
Gary Milhollin & Valerie Lincy

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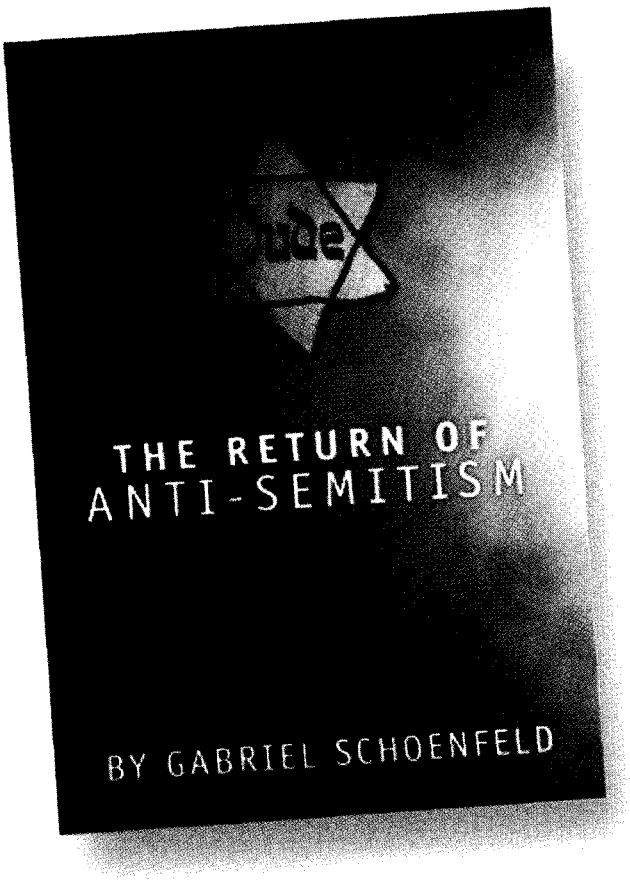

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Commentary®

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Commentary
February 2004

Letters from Readers

Anti-Semitism

To the Editor:

Natan Sharansky's eloquent and insightful article ["On Hating the Jews," November 2003] is especially welcome at a time when the hydra of anti-Semitism is once more raising its ugly head. I would like to extend his analysis with two points.

First, as the Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad recently reminded us, one does not need to be an Arab Muslim to believe in a "soft" version of the global Jewish conspiracy; nor does one have to be a fanatical jihadist to embrace the anti-Jewish ideology that has become so pervasive in the Islamic world. On the contrary, one can be an enlightened "moderate" like Mahathir, committed to the advancement of education, improving the economy, and encouraging competent administration, while still believing that "Jews rule this world by proxy."

Mahathir's case should make us realize that the "Islamicization" of anti-Semitism is by far the most serious contemporary manifestation of the "longest hatred." It is the Islamists who currently present the most lethal and potentially genocidal threat. This can hardly be repeated often enough. In its attitude toward Jews and Israel, the Muslim world today has attained a level of dehumanizing rhetoric that can be compared only with Nazi Germany in its heyday. Mahathir's "civilized" veneer was chilling enough.

Second, Mr. Sharansky rightly notes that anti-Americanism bears an "uncanny resemblance to anti-Semitism," but this needs to be fleshed out a bit more. America, the Jews, and Israel have become metaphors, in the Muslim world as in Europe, for the dark side of modernity and are perceived as rapaciously aggressive and expansionist. They are in effect being burdened with everything unacceptable or criminal in the history of their accusers—surely a classic case of projection. Thus America and Israel—not totalitarian Islam—are relentlessly vilified as dangers to peace on earth, the source of all violence, the cause of terrorism, the incarnation of fascism, and not least as serial violators of human rights.

Muslim and European anti-Semites have also had a field-day with the notion of a "Jewish cabal" running America, thereby fusing their fear of the United States and "Jewish power" into a more coherent fantasy of victimization. Most normal people in America refuse to accept that such highly irrational myths can be taken seriously by millions. Unfortunately, they are very much mistaken.

Robert S. Wistrich
Hebrew University
Jerusalem, Israel

To the Editor:

In the very thought-provoking article by Natan Sharansky, his linking of hatred of Jews with hatred of America was very apt. What I would add in both cases is hatred of achievement. Years ago, when I was reading a book of Churchill's speeches, I came across a remark of his back in 1939 that the Jews in Palestine had "made the desert bloom." My immediate response was that this was why there was no peace in the Middle East. I am convinced that if the Jews had been as poor and backward as the Arabs, some kind of mutual accommodation would have been worked out by now.

Mr. Sharansky puts more weight than I would on Jews being a separate or rejectionist group. Separate and rejectionist groups who are not high achievers seem to be tolerated much better. Who is more separate and rejectionist today than people living on Indian reservations? And yet who hates them? They are no threat to anyone's ego, and that is the key point. Even envy is

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overrated. Who in the ghetto hates the Rockefellers? But the Korean merchant who came here with practically nothing, barely able to speak English, and who has achieved a modest prosperity by his own efforts, is like a slap across the face to those who stagnated while he advanced. He is resented, which is much worse than being envied.

Wealth from whatever source may be envied, but it is achievement that is resented. Had Jews been a hereditary nobility, able to live idly on vast amounts of inherited wealth, there would probably be far less anti-Semitism. Once, when an official of a Jewish organization asked me what Jews themselves could do to reduce other groups' hostility to them, the only suggestion I could give him was one word: fail.

While this may be a sad commentary on human nature, it seems to me to apply well beyond ethnic issues. Those Americans who ask what we have done to cause such hatred and terrorist attacks against us should be answered: we have achieved. In many times and places, that has been more than enough to provoke hostility. In the case of Middle East terrorists, we have achieved what they cannot hope to achieve in another hundred years. Lashing out at America is all that they have as an alternative to unbearable insignificance in the world for a civilization that was once in the forefront of progress. Anyone who knows how to stir up resentments has an army at his disposal.

THOMAS SOWELL
Hoover Institution
Stanford, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Natan Sharansky is right to trace the lineage of anti-Semitism to actual differences in belief rather than to simple intolerance for the "other." It is important to keep in mind, however, that theological differences have been powerfully augmented by jealousy arising from the emergence of Jews as successful "pariah capitalists" throughout the world. Barred from the professions but not from charging interest, Jews became magnates of junk, outsider merchants, and financiers.

Unlike what might be called theological anti-Semitism, jealousy of this sort is hardly confined to Jews, as the tragedies that have befallen non-resident Indians in Africa or overseas Chinese in Indonesia powerfully attest. Indeed, Mahathir Mohamad's recent anti-Jewish diatribe might well be viewed as a denunciation of pariah capitalists. It is important to recall, in this regard, Malaysia's 1965 separation from Singapore, with its majority population of Chinese, many of whom were leading entrepreneurs.

Amelioration of anti-Semitism requires not just theological rapprochement but gradual acceptance of the need to spread the benefits of trade and capitalism beyond those whose names are on shop signs. It is one of the roles of Jews to stand up for such principles.

HOWARD HUSOCK
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

"On Hating the Jews" is as compelling as it is disturbing. Natan Sharansky's survey of the background and current status of anti-Semitism should serve as a warning against abstracting—what he calls "universalizing"—the Holocaust and its aftermath from the specific belief system that has sustained the Jewish people through the centuries. Locating the key source of hatred of the Jews in the inability of ideological, cultural, and theological rivals to destroy the core of Jewish belief, Mr. Sharansky serves notice that the squalor of this animus is matched by the grandeur of Judaism.

I wonder, though, if the brush-strokes of his piece are not slightly too broad. Several distinctions are lost in Mr. Sharansky's compelling narrative. First, does he believe that Arab-Muslim responses to Jewish survival are in the same class as European-Christian responses? Second, is it not the case that just as a "European" body of opinion in the United States has inverted reality in the name of anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism, so too a still larger body of opinion in Europe holds firm to democratic values? I would suggest that there is a qualitative difference between post-Nazi, post-Communist Europe and the unrelenting armed struggle bent on the destruction of the Jewish people that one finds in the Middle East.

In the final analysis, the political world may be defined less by the friends and enemies of the Jewish people and Israel than by the quiet complicity in a subdued anti-Semitism of those in Europe and America who hope that the appetites of Middle East tyrants will be satisfied by offering up the Jewish people. A democratic culture, a competitive polity, and a vibrant market remain the triptych best able to make it possible for Jews to outlast their implacable foes. Having Mr. Sharansky's remarkable analysis to guide us should help.

IRVING LOUIS HOROWITZ
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

In his interesting analysis of anti-Semitism, Natan Sharansky does not place enough emphasis on the charge that Jews killed Jesus and rejected him as the messiah and son of God. This, more than anything else, accounts for the unremitting degradation, murder, and pillage of Jews since Constantine. Every libel against the Jews now preached by the most bloodthirsty mullah can be found in the teachings of the Christian church, which laid down such a deep stratum of revulsion that the literature of Europe is replete with the most horrendous images of nefarious Jews, of which Shylock and Fagin are only the most notorious examples. Even agnostics and atheists imbibe these images, and grow up hating or, more genteelly, disliking Jews without even knowing why.

It is true that the decades since the Holocaust have witnessed many attempts by the Catholic Church and other churches to come to grips with their responsibility in fomenting the anti-Semitism that culminated in the destruction of European Jewry. Those attempts, however, have met not only with the calculated hostility of some church leaders, but with self-serving obfuscations, omissions, and justifications of the unjustifiable. More to the point, the

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Joseph Mali and Robert Wokler, Editors

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charge of deicide is still a staple of Christian teaching, enshrined in the New Testament.

So long as this despicable dogma continues to be impressed on young minds, it is doubtful that anti-Semitism can ever be eliminated. It is time that Jews, certainly leaders as redoubtable as Mr. Sharansky, have the courage to face this most unpleasant fact.

HENRY SHERMAN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Natan Sharansky is right that the threat to Jews today is far graver and more complex than it was either in ancient times or in the 1930's; that hatred of the Jews has now reached surreal levels in the Arab and Islamic world; that it has become politically correct among anti-colonialist, progressive intellectuals who have one standard for Israel and a much lower one for every other country in which tyranny, torture, honor killings, genocide, and other human-rights abuses go unchallenged; that anti-Semitism flourishes under both totalitarian and democratic regimes; that Israel has become the Jew of the world and a scapegoat for America; and that the classical explanations for hatred of the Jews are no longer sufficient to explain why it has reached epidemic proportions.

But what Mr. Sharansky does not understand—and what I describe in my book *The New Anti-Semitism* (2003)—is the intellectual force in the U.S. of victimology. In today's academy, victimology fills the role once played by Marx's dialectical materialism. In this view, all "victims"—the poor, the racially despised, the formerly colonized, women—are noble and powerless; all "oppressors" are evil, corrupt, and all-powerful. Thus, many Western intellectuals, including Jews, have placed themselves squarely in the service of the most oppressed "victims" of all: the Palestinian suicide bomber, the billionaire Osama bin Laden, the mass murderer Yasir Arafat, the tyrant Saddam Hussein. And they have opposed with scorn, sarcasm, rage, and blacklisting their designated oppressor, the Israelis, whom they have dubbed "worse than Nazis."

PHYLLIS CHESLER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

According to Natan Sharansky, Jews are hated because they uphold the good. But after 2,500 years of Jews being blamed for every imaginable idea and then for its opposite, I believe that anti-Semitism is just a culturally habitual paranoia. Put simply, anti-Semitism persists because it persists; it has accumulated more than enough mass and momentum over the millennia to keep rolling along.

I do not deny that Jews often espouse things that the world would do well to embrace. But there are also stupid and disreputable and even evil Jews, who drive the same anti-Semites up the wall not because they are stupid or disreputable or evil, but because they are Jews. Jews are thus both essential and irrelevant to anti-Semites, who stalk them on every conceivable pretext and will no more cease hallucinating about them than an addict will let go of a needle.

Jews, therefore, ought not waste time worrying whether their conduct will exacerbate anti-Semitism. It is much more important to demonstrate that the price of hating the Jews is at least as high as the price of being Jewish.

SETH A. HALPERN
Scarsdale, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

In "On Hating the Jews," Natan Sharansky searches for a single explanation for the astonishing persistence of anti-Semitism. For most of my life, I have asked the same question. German-born and raised—I was five when Hitler took over and seventeen when he passed me on to Stalin—I received my real education in democracy, freedom, and tolerance in the American sector of postwar West Berlin.

As a teenager, I had been exposed, of course, to the daily Hitler/Goebbels dosage of anti-Semitism. The Jews were responsible for despicable plutocratic capitalism, I was taught, and they were also to be blamed for Communism and Bolshevism. I was confused: how could any one group of people be responsible for such opposing political viewpoints?

So why is there still anti-Semitism? It may be envy of Jewish success, jealousy, or avarice. It may be an instinctive distrust of isolated strangers, of people who act differently, who are different, and who choose to stay separate.

Still, in seeing an "uncanny resemblance" between anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism, Mr. Sharansky may have introduced a bit of wishful thinking. I have never met an American who considered himself "chosen" or thought that America was "a light unto the nations." Unlike Israel, America is composed of a multitude of ethnic, national, and religious backgrounds. It would be impossible to hate Jews here for being strange immigrants. We all are.

GUNTHER GREULICH
Lynnfield, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

Natan Sharansky suggests that the enmity directed against Israel and the United States arises from similarities in the origin and ethos of both nations. But drawing too close a parallel between Israel and the United States on the grounds that they are similarly perceived by their common enemies may lead to the romanticized conclusion that both countries are fighting the same war, for the same reasons, with similar goals. If only this were so.

Mr. Sharansky's mindset is reminiscent of that of the American and English Jews in the 1940's who saw World War II through the prism of both their patriotic duty to support the Allies and their concern for the Jewish people. For the United States and England, however, the survival of the Jews was an irrelevancy, and the establishment of a Jewish state an impediment to projecting their power in the postwar world.

In 2004, perhaps it is a mistake to assume that, in the "war on terror," the survival of Israel will take precedence over the West's fear of, and economic dependence on, Arab tyrannies.

MICHAEL G. MOSKOW
Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania

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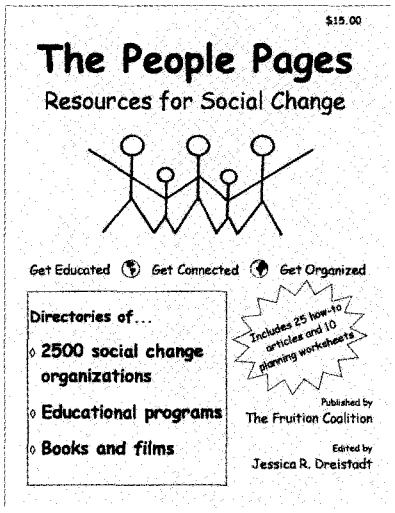

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TO THE EDITOR:

Kudos to Natan Sharansky for examining hatred of the Jews in its historic context and for placing it at the core of the community's concerns. But I would have welcomed a more detailed discussion of how Jews should respond to this hatred, since it is only by our reaction to anti-Semitism that we can discourage its lethal aggression.

Mr. Sharansky demonstrates that "conforming to the template of the world's moralizers," especially by remaining committed to the so-called "peace process," has led to ever greater attacks on Israel and world Jewry. He might have drawn the lesson that the obligatory response to aggression is principled resistance, while the greatest incitement to aggression is accommodation.

LYNN FIELD
Morristown, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Is it possible that any reader of COMMENTARY is not already aware of the extent and danger of anti-Semitism? Our need is for specific, realistic approaches for combating it. Jews are expert in lamenting past and present ills, less expert in figuring out how to prevent and curtail them.

RUTH BLOCK
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Natan Sharansky contends that "the always specious line between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism has now become completely blurred." While anti-Zionism is no doubt a convenient way for many to mask their anti-Semitism, there are some, including myself, who criticize the state of Israel while also abhorring anti-Semitism. Is it not possible that Israel, unquestionably the most democratic country in the Middle East, has committed and continues to commit some actions that are cause for legitimate criticism? Is it not possible for a critic of Israel to be free of anti-Semitism just as a critic of Zimbabwe's radical land reform might not necessarily be a racist?

MATTHEW DE ZOETE
Hamilton, Canada

NATAN SHARANSKY writes:

Years of exposure to Israel's contentious public discourse have left me ill-prepared for these kind remarks. I would like to thank my correspondents very much for their civil and generous words.

Let me begin with a general observation. My purpose in writing "On Hating the Jews" was to draw attention to what I see as a bright thread running through the broad and intricate tapestry of anti-Semitism. This search for a common denominator precluded any in-depth analysis of all the complex facets of the phenomenon. No doubt, in focusing on roots, I did not give sufficient consideration to branches. Like many readers, I too think that this subject can be better fleshed out.

There are a few points, however, that warrant specific reply. The argument of Thomas Sowell and Howard Husock—that economic achievement is often resented—seems to me sound. But I still think that Jewish success, while undoubtedly magnifying anti-Semitic sentiment, does not breed it. In Europe, the poor and provincial Jews of the shtetl were hated alongside their wealthy and urbane co-religionists. For that matter, anti-Semitism in America, by most accounts, was greater at the beginning of the 20th century, when Jewish immigrants were poor, than at its end, when Jews had attained a high level of prosperity.

The anti-Semitic pogroms that plagued Russia at the end of the 19th century would seem to offer still further evidence that hatred of Jews as Jews is stronger than hatred of achievers. It is well known that the czar regarded these pogroms as an effective means of diverting popular discontent from his regime. Perhaps less well known is that the 19th-century revolutionary movements, which sought to unite the masses in a class struggle against that regime and the Russian nobility, likewise saw the pogroms as contributing to their aims. Desperate to find the "spark that would turn into a flame," the revolutionaries quickly realized that, for Russians, anti-Semitism was a more incendiary agent than resentment of the upper classes.

As for other ethnic exemplars of achievement, Korean merchants and Chinese expatriates may indeed be hated in some quarters, but I have yet to hear anyone suggest that Koreans are plotting to rule the world, or that the Chinese were behind 9/11.

It seems, then, that hatred of Jews is fundamentally different. Seth A. Halpern is right to point out that this hatred "has accumulated more than enough mass over the millennia to keep rolling along," and Henry Sherman is right to assert that the Catholic Church has contributed greatly to building it. Mr. Sherman is also on the mark in stressing the need for the Church to go much further in ending Church-sponsored anti-Semitism. Yet, as I wrote in my essay, though the Church may be a big part of the story, it is not the whole story. Historically, major waves of anti-Semitism have been triggered by a perceived clash of values between the Jews and their enemies—enemies that have included but have not been limited to the Church.

IN "On Hating the Jews" I also contended that a clash of values is at the root of anti-Americanism. I was sure my thoughts on this matter would not be acceptable to everyone, but the refutations offered by a number of my correspondents have surprised me.

Thus, Gunther Greulich writes that he has never met an American who considered himself "chosen" or who thought that America was "a light unto the nations." For my own part, I have met few Americans who have *not* seen their country and themselves in these terms. The idea of the United States as the "last best hope on earth," as a country with a unique role to play in the world, has long been embraced by American leaders, and the American people appear genuinely to believe that their system of government and way of life are superior to those of any other nation. Foreigners often see America in a similar light. As was true a generation ago, many of today's dissidents, sitting in jail cells in Cuba, Egypt, China, and elsewhere, draw inspiration

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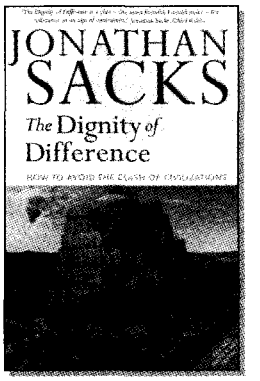

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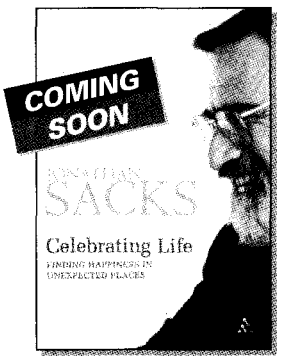

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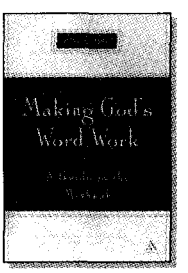

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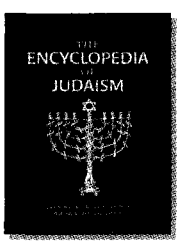

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from America in their efforts to bring freedom and opportunity to their native lands.

Phyllis Chesler also appears to know a different America from the one familiar to me. To be sure, she is undoubtedly correct about the central role played by "victimology" on today's campuses, as a recent tour of American universities convinced me. But proving that something is a force among intellectuals is not the same as proving that it is an intellectual force. Just as Marxism, for all its vogue elsewhere, has remained on the margins of American public debate, "victimology" appears to have a much smaller impact on Main Street than on the campus. Let us hope things remain that way.

Michael G. Moskow draws on the lessons of World War II to urge caution in assuming that America and Israel are "fighting the same war, for the same reasons, with similar goals." But the real lesson of World War II is not that America and the Jews had different enemies, but that the Jews were powerless to defend themselves. That is thankfully no longer the case.

On the issue of who *is* the enemy, both Robert S. Wistrich and Irving Louis Horowitz point specifically to the threat posed by Islamist anti-Semitism. There can be no question that this genocidal force, which utilizes modern mass media to broadcast ancient libels into the homes and minds of tens of millions of people, has helped to trigger a global wave of anti-Semitism unseen since the days of Hitler. But the anti-Semitism of "post-Nazi, post-Communist" Europe, though more tepid, is also more insidious. For, unlike the vulgar, raw anti-Semitism that emanates from the Middle East, European anti-Semitism is masked by a veneer of political correctness and advances under the banner of human rights. The threat it poses can appear less grave, but in the end we may find it easier to resist the evil that shows its true face than to resist—or even expose—the evil that masquerades as good.

Matthew de Zoete helps to clarify this point by asking whether "it is possible for a critic of Israel to be free of anti-Semitism." It goes without saying that criticizing the policy of an Israeli government does not mean that one is an anti-Semite. But neither does criticizing a policy of the Israeli government absolve one of the charge of anti-Semitism. Whether the label is appropriate depends on two further questions.

First, has the criticism been applied selectively? In other words, do similar policies by other governments engender the same criticism, or is there a double standard at work? It is anti-Semitism, for instance, when Israel is singled out for human-rights abuses while tried and true abusers like China, Iran, Cuba, and Syria are ignored. Similarly, it is anti-Semitism when Israel's anti-terror actions are condemned while similar actions undertaken by another country are condoned or passed over in silence.

Second, how is the criticism expressed? Are Israeli actions being blown out of all sensible proportion? Are Jews being demonized? When attempts to stop Palestinian suicide bombers are regarded as morally equivalent to suicide bombings themselves, the comparison can only be called anti-Semitic. The same can be said of any attempt to draw an analogy between Israelis and Nazis.

While criticism of an Israeli policy may not be anti-Semitic, the denial of Israel's right to exist—i.e., anti-Zionism—is always anti-Semitic. If nations have a "right" to live securely in their homeland, then the Jews have a "right" to live securely in their homeland.

A NUMBER of correspondents ask what should be the response, including the Jewish response, to anti-Semitism. While this was not part of my purpose in writing "On Hating the Jews," I agree with Lynn Field that "the greatest incitement to aggression is accommodation." In any case, since the only way Israel can accommodate today's anti-Semites is to commit suicide, "principled resistance" is indeed the only option.

If Ruth Block is right that Jews are "expert in lamenting past and present ills, less expert in figuring out how to prevent and curtail them," that may be because, for 2,000 years, they lacked the power either to prevent or to cure many of those ills. Without for a moment minimizing the duty of all decent souls everywhere to oppose and rebuff the insidious malignancy of today's anti-Semitism, it is certainly the prime responsibility of the sovereign and empowered Jewish people to combat its enemies with every resource at its disposal.

I Thee Wed?

TO THE EDITOR:

Sam Schulman is right that people have come to see same-sex marriage as inevitable ["Gay Marriage—and Marriage," November 2003]. In fact, more than two-thirds of Americans now believe gay people will win the freedom to marry, and nationwide polls show that while there is not yet consistent majority *support* for marriage equality, the majority is ready to *accept* it. Substantial majorities oppose discriminatory attacks on gay families, including proposals to amend the Constitution to ban gay marriage.

Like many others, Mr. Schulman bases most of his arguments against marriage equality on religious principles. But lesbian and gay couples seek the right to *civil* marriage licenses, not a mandate from the state telling religious communities to perform marriage rites. Churches and members of the clergy should not be compelled to recognize gay unions, just as they do not have to perform the weddings of interfaith couples or divorced people.

Mr. Schulman asserts that marriage has been unchanged throughout modern history. But within the lifetimes of many of us, women in fact lost rights when they married, people were denied the right to marry someone of the "wrong" race, couples were not allowed to terminate failed or abusive marriages, and government prevented even married couples from using contraception. Despite opponents of equality who claimed at each turning point that change was against "God's will" or "the

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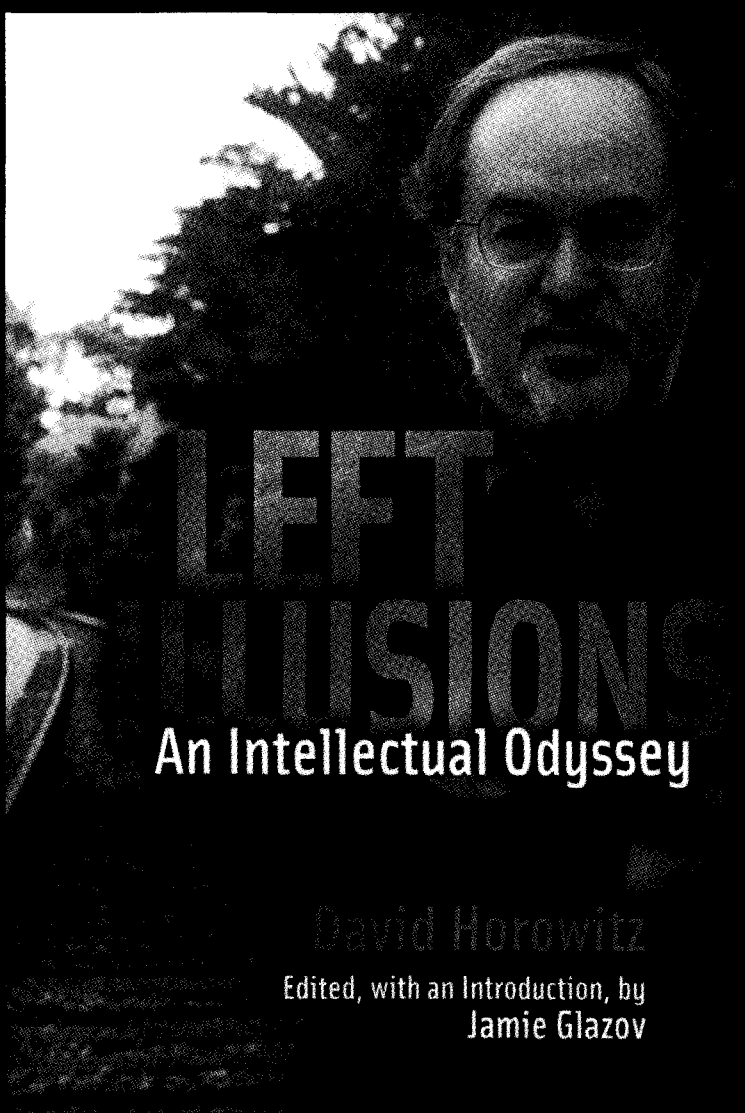

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definition of marriage," we changed the law, and few Americans would argue today that marriage was better before such changes.

Mr. Schulman contends that ending the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage will have a devastating impact on this important and most resilient institution. But the strength of marriage is based not on whom it excludes, but rather on love, commitment, self-sacrifice, responsibility, and the shared pursuit of happiness. If we as a society believe that marriage promotes stability, healthy families, and strong communities, why would this not hold true for same-sex couples as well? Today many same-sex couples are raising children. It makes no sense to punish these children for having the "wrong" kind of parents, or to withhold from their parents the structure of marriage.

There is simply no logical or constitutional reason why gay couples should be denied the same freedom to marry that the Supreme Court has said may not be denied to, for example, deadbeat dads or convicted felons. Ending discrimination in marriage is both right and inevitable. Any other solution condemns gay Americans to the status of second-class citizens, separate and unequal.

EVAN WOLFSON
Freedom to Marry
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Sam Schulman is to be applauded for at least attempting a reasoned argument against gay marriage. In fact, he is uncommonly honest in acknowledging that the idea of same-sex marriage appeals "to our better moral natures as well as to our reason." But Mr. Schulman's argument stumbles and falls—as all such arguments ultimately do—because he peddles his subjective perceptions and experiences as essential truths and is unable to articulate any specific injury that would flow directly and necessarily from the institution of same-sex marriage.

Mr. Schulman makes a very awkward attempt to argue that gay marriage would victimize women, basing his case on a picture of heterosexual marriage that is both sexist and completely unrecognizable to me. He argues that marriage is "built around female sexuality and female procreativity." But what about marriages that last well beyond a woman's childbearing years or indeed beyond a couple's sexual appetite for one another?

Mr. Schulman completes his Victorian image by suggesting that a man's role in marriage is, at best, functional. He argues that men need not be married to "feel safe and free" in expressing their sexuality, and that male premarital sex is not "essentially incomplete" compared to married sex. One wonders how Mrs. Schulman takes this news, but then surely she must know by now that Mr. Schulman married her only out of a desire for children, or to placate her, or out of fear of losing her. This is not marriage as I have come to know it in my own life or in the lives of my peers.

Even if one accepts all of Mr. Schulman's points about the nature and purpose of marriage, we still have not seen an actual victim of publicly recognizing same-sex marriages. Would women lose some institutionalized protection against rape? Would they be prevented somehow from having their sexuality, as Mr. Schulman puts it, "gathered in"? If same-sex marriage is so very bad, one ought to be able to explain in some detail what terrible things would happen as a result of allowing it. Mr. Schulman gives us a good deal of clucking but displays no pieces of fallen sky.

TIM DECKER
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR:

If a term other than "marriage" were applied, would Sam Schulman support granting to gay couples all of what he calls the "real, tangible benefits" to which any married straight couple—completely irrespective of their ability or intention to create new life, to sustain the species, or to help the woman avoid unhappiness—is automatically entitled? If not, his arguments are nothing more than a veiled endorsement of continued second-class citizenry for gay people.

EVAN SCHWARTZ
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Sam Schulman does the marriage debate a great service with his thoughtful and thought-provoking piece. I agree with him that "the essence of marriage is to sanction and solemnize that connection of opposites which alone creates new life." I am not sure how he thinks that differs from my own formulation, which he is generous enough to quote: "Most men and women are powerfully drawn to perform a sexual act that can and does generate life. Marriage is our attempt to reconcile and harmonize the erotic, social, sexual, and financial needs of men and women with the needs of their partner and their children."

The difference, I suppose, is that Mr. Schulman champions the idea that marriage is primarily about protecting women. Most good family men feel this way about their marriages, and there would be more good family men if more women encouraged and applauded them for it. Mr. Schulman taps here into some of the profound sources of the marriage idea, including the reality that sex between men and women is a radically unreciprocal act.

One of the deep, inarticulate erotic attractions of marriage for men is that it gives new meaning to their otherwise urgent, random, and seemingly futile sexuality. In becoming a husband and father, a man finds a way of experiencing manhood that is not at odds with love—which is a fancy way of agreeing with Mr. Schulman's view that marriage gives the average man a chance to be the hero. That marriage survives today at all—85 percent of Americans marry despite our ongoing sexual revolution—is a tribute to how deep-seated is the male need to experience masculinity in this way.

Nonetheless, it will not do to define the essence of marriage as respecting the freedom of women to choose fathers for their children. I think Mr. Schulman is right that few men and most women feel unprotected in sexual intercourse outside of marriage and that this is one powerful impetus toward marriage. But it is impossible to survey the

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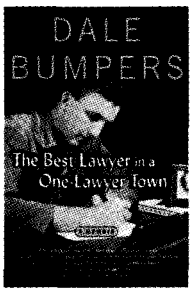

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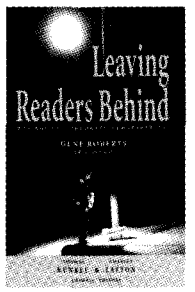

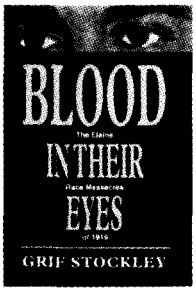

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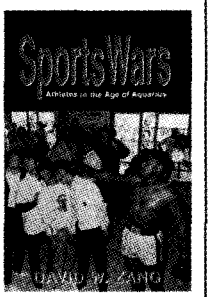

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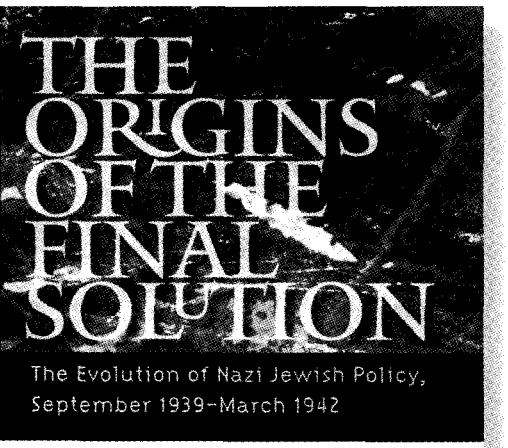

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laws surrounding sexuality and marriage across cultures and still view them as intended to protect women's freedom of choice or their psychological well-being. Many societies both support marriage and radically degrade women.

The fundamental reason for marriage, what Mr. Schulman calls its "essence," is that every society needs babies and babies need mothers and fathers. Men and women also need each other, but in ways that masculine norms may make it difficult for men to articulate.

MAGGIE GALLAGHER
Institute for Marriage and Public Policy
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

"The Talmud records that God weeps when a man puts aside his first wife." In fact, the Talmud says (in Tractates Gittin and Sanhedrin) that the altar, not God, weeps. This correction is significant in that the symbolism of the altar's weeping is meant to express one of the points of Mr. Schulman's argument. The altar, as focal point of the temple service, is the meeting place, as it were, of two opposites: mortal man and immortal God. The altar therefore cries when marriage, another meeting place of two opposites, is torn asunder. In this sense, the altar's weeping speaks to the very nature of marriage as a connection between man and woman exclusively.

AVRAHAM ALTER
Brookline, Massachusetts

SAM SCHULMAN writes:

Vexingly, Evan Wolfson repeats arguments in favor of gay marriage that I may have overpraised while ignoring or mischaracterizing the arguments I advanced against it. Thus, he restates the "civil rights" case: when marriage is restricted to heterosexual couples, the good things marriage delivers are unfairly denied to those of different sexuality.

But I contended—strenuously—that marriage has nothing to do with delivering such things as commitment, monogamy, stability, or happiness. Instead, it is about protecting female sexuality from male depredation, and ensuring the orderly passing-on of genetic and material inheritance from one generation to the next. Marriage is thus simply not germane to the concerns of couples who do not consist of a woman and a man.

What goes for marriage goes for marriage laws: they, too, cannot and do not legislate happiness, monogamy, or stability. Would Mr. Wolfson complain that laws against cockfighting violate the civil rights of children because such laws apply only to chickens? In any case, if the courts succeed in inventing gay marriage, a much larger group of our fellow citizens than gays will *still* suffer a deprivation of what Mr. Wolfson seems to think of as their civil rights, simply by dint of their inability, for one reason or another, to hold on to the love of another person.

Tim Decker, in spite of his generous attempt to follow my way of looking at things, likewise fails to understand my argument. If it is "sexist" to make any distinction between men and women, then he is right to describe me, along with most feminists, as a sexist. My description of the different meanings of marriage for men and women was not meant to be a complete catalog. Nevertheless, at bottom men and women *are* forced to understand marriage differently because, in perfectly obvious and universal ways, their sexuality has different consequences.

I have no doubt that Mr. Decker experiences marriage in a more exalted fashion than I describe. *I* certainly do. But marriage has its lows as well as its highs—indeed, if lovers had only highs, marriage need not exist. To understand what makes marriage necessary to our humanity, Mr. Decker should close his Dante and contemplate instead the sour-faced father with a shotgun, the harassed mother of a daughter saying to herself, "Were this wild thing wedded, more love should I have, and much less care."

Mr. Decker asks what specific injury would befall existing marriages within, so to speak, a half-mile radius of a lawful gay marriage. It is a good question, if only because some supporters of the traditional definition of marriage make the mistake of insisting on such very specific—yet terribly vague—injuries. But let me answer with another hypothetical question. What injuries would occur if incest were legalized between consenting adults? (This is an important question for me since I believe that marriage exists as an extension of the incest taboo.) To be sure, scientists might predict an increase in the prevalence of birth defects. But such an increase, however precisely calculated, would be trivial compared with the consequences that would follow for our humanity.

A question of a different sort is posed by Evan Schwartz: would I be willing to grant all the real, tangible benefits of marriage to gay couples if the arrangement were not called "marriage"? First of all, it seems to me (whose legal training consists of having taken the LSAT exam 30 years ago) that contracts can indeed be devised to replicate those specifically tangible benefits that marriage is expected to deliver. In the Western world—in the Roman and the Jewish traditions, for example—marriage was initiated by forming contracts between two individuals, and nothing does or should prevent two (or more) people from entering into such contracts today.

But let me point to a neglected problem with the idea of "civil unions." Just as marriage does not exist to make two people happy, so, too, the purpose behind the shared material benefits of marriage is not to make a strong and happy relationship. Marriage's property rights and rights of inheritance developed to protect a family's wealth, real estate, status, and so forth from one generation to the next, even when—particularly when—there was conflict within marriages and families. The power to pass on to one's own children one's accumulated property, and the property of one's ancestors, is one of those basic needs that define us as human.

How does this apply to gay civil unions? A point I have not adequately stressed is that marriage is dangerous. It demands of a man and a woman that they put

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themselves in one another's power. This creates the opportunity to perpetrate many a crime in secret: the physically and/or psychologically stronger partner can exert influence on the weaker that is based not on love but on violence and greed. Such things happen between married couples and between parents and children; but in traditional marriage, which takes place within a larger system of kinship, several forces mitigate the danger, including the presence of watchful children and siblings.

Gay partnerships have few if any of these natural lines of defense. They are only as strong as are the mutual honor, sincerity, and love of the two partners themselves—rather slender reeds in any relationship, as who among us can fail to attest? I would expect that, within gay-marriage simulacrums, instances of callous exploitation, looting of property, physical violence, and medical murder would be piteously high. It is for others to calculate whether the gains would be worth the suffering of the elderly, ill, weak, and sexually needy at the hands of the strong and ruthless.

To the generous and always impressive Maggie Gallagher, I would say that we differ most of all on the question of whether children or women are at the center of marriage's essence. To me, at any rate, that "essence" is less about respecting women's freedom to choose fathers than about ensuring women's ability to exercise any freedom or physical integrity at all—however limited this can be in many societies. In this respect, there is no difference between marriages that include children and those that do not.

Praising my character in order to excuse our disagreement, Maggie Gallagher suggests that I make the mistake of other "good family men" who believe that marriage is about protecting women. I think instead that marriage is important because it protects women from bad family men—and from bad men in general.

Finally, after being criticized by Evan Wolfson for making a covertly religious argument and damned with faint praise by Tim Decker for making an argument based on reason alone, it is bracing to be so authoritatively corrected by Avraham Alter. His reminder—and eloquent interpretation—of what the Talmud actually says in the passage I imprecisely cited is worth attending to. In tampering so casually with the institution of marriage, we play heedlessly with the wellsprings of what makes us human—and not gods.

Artistic Standards

TO THE EDITOR:

I was disappointed by Terry Teachout's discussion of Charles Murray's *Human Accomplishment: The Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences, 800 B.C. to 1950* ["Charles Murray's All-Stars," November 2003]. Mr. Teachout alleges that Murray— who lays out his methodology in excruciating detail—"is indiscriminately hostile to modernism" and has "cut his analytic cloth to fit his aesthetic tastes." Yet he provides little evidence for this serious charge against one of the leading social scientists of our time.

In fact, as Murray makes crushingly clear, his hostility is directed not at modernism, but at the postmodernist aesthetics Mr. Teachout himself dislikes. In a passage Mr. Teachout does not cite, Murray writes, "I find it impossible to take postmodernism seriously. . . . If the criteria for the choice are rootedness in human experience, seriousness of purpose, and intellectual depth, choosing the classic aesthetic tradition over postmodernism is not a close call." Like Mr. Teachout, Murray disdains postmodernism for rejecting the idea that one work of art can be aesthetically superior to another. This hardly seems like what Mr. Teachout calls a nefarious "private agenda."

In attempting to provide specific evidence of how Murray's supposed antimodernist bias has distorted his findings, Mr. Teachout writes:

> In, for example, his description of the highest-scoring significant figures of Western art, [Murray] observes: "The presence of Picasso in second place will surprise and perhaps outrage some readers."
>
> Anyone who fought last spring to get a ticket to the Museum of Modern Art's hugely popular Matisse-Picasso exhibition is likely to wonder just who could be "outraged" by Picasso's high index score, second only to Michelangelo's. The answer, one eventually concludes, is Charles Murray himself.

But lots of people dislike Picasso, including many who love Matisse. There is nothing at all unreasonable about Murray's note, which goes on to explain to the many Picasso-haters, "The amount of space accorded to [Picasso] reflects not just the high regard in which his art is held, but also his seminal role in several phases of the break with classicism that occurred in the late 19th and early 20th century." More to the point, unless Mr. Teachout wants to contend that Picasso is actually even more eminent than Murray's first-place finisher (Michelangelo), Picasso's sky-high rating is, logically, an endorsement of Murray's objectivity.

If Mr. Teachout thinks that Murray's methodology is biased by his aesthetic tastes, he needs to offer reasons for this assertion, not just baseless slanders.

STEVE SAILER
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR:

I greatly enjoyed Terry Teachout's review of *Human Accomplishment*, but he misses an important point. Charles Murray compiled his list of high achievers in art from standard reference works that focus on Western art and often compress entire non-Western traditions into short entries, or acknowledge only the very best artists in a non-Western tradition. This is like using a microscope to study Western culture and a telescope to look at non-Western civilization. Such a method finds, of course, that Westerners are the main producers of great art, but this conclusion is a product of the data base, not an objective measure of cultural achievement.

Further, musical and visual arts in nonliterate societies (ones that do not

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record their accomplishments in encyclopedias) cannot be measured by Murray's method, although we have no a-priori reason to believe that such cultures are unable to produce great music or art.

FABIO ROJAS
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

Steve Sailer is right to say that Charles Murray *claims* his quarrel is with the recent phenomenon of postmodernism. As even the most casual reading of my piece will show, I readily acknowledge this fact. It appears to me, however, that Murray has confounded postmodernism with modernism.

Early in *Human Accomplishment*, for instance, Murray asserts that the postmodernist project began in "the first half of [the 20th century] with influential new voices, especially those of Benedetto Croce and John Dewey," and the publication in 1923 of C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards's *The Meaning of Meaning*. In the same chapter, he cites what I take to be three tenets of (what he believes to be) postmodern thought, namely that "melody and harmony are boring and outdated," "representational art is boring and outdated," and "the concept of beauty is meaningless." As is perfectly obvious from this and from various passages quoted in my piece, Murray has in mind not merely comparatively recent developments in art but a larger phenomenon whose origins he dates to "a period starting in the late 1800's and extending through World War I"—that is, the early years of modernism. All this (and much more) suggests that he does not distinguish between the radical relativism of contemporary postmodernism and the related but nonetheless very different phenomenon of hermetic modernism.

Murray's personal opinion of Picasso may or may not be implicit in the particular passage I cite. Only he can answer that question. But context is everything, and that he has no use for most modernist art, and no awareness of its extreme stylistic diversity, is similarly clear from numerous other passages in *Human Accomplishment*, notably this one, which I did not quote:

> One can easily imagine that worthy poetry went unpublished in [the 20th century], for example. But did 1900-1950 really have an invisible *oeuvre* of beautiful symphonies or exquisite representational art created but never exposed to the world? It is hard to imagine. Isolated cases of competent work, yes; a substantial body of fine work, no. It is more plausible to believe that people who *could* have created beautiful symphonies in the classical style or exquisite representational art didn't because those genres had fallen out of critical favor.

Those are the words of a man who does not know enough about art in the 20th century to be generalizing about it—a category that would also appear to include Steve Sailer.

Mr. Sailer further claims that I have "slandered" Murray by claiming that he has "cut his analytic cloth to fit his aesthetic tastes." According to Webster, to slander is "to defame; to injure by maliciously uttering a false report; to tarnish or impair the reputation of by false tales maliciously told or propagated; to calumniate." That is strong language, especially when used by a correspondent who has apparently not read *Human Accomplishment* (or my piece) closely enough to realize the far-reaching implications of the fact that in assembling the "experts" on whose published works he has based his charts and tables, Murray has deliberately and avowedly selected only those who subscribe to the "classic aesthetic tradition" of which he approves. This proves that the statistical apparatus of *Human Accomplishment* is constructed in such a way as to supply "evidence" supporting its author's anti-modern aesthetic predilections: Murray tells us so.

Fabio Rojas, on the other hand, does Murray a disservice. Appendix 3 of *Human Accomplishment* makes clear that the "standard reference works" on which Murray has drawn in creating his lists of "high achievers in art" include a large number of works written specifically about non-Western traditions, many of which were the work of non-Western scholars. Whatever else *Human Accomplishment* is, it is not deliberately Eurocentric, save in the specific case of music, where Murray explicitly excludes non-Western achievements because of "the lack of a tradition of named composers in non-Western civilizations."

Mr. Rojas's suggestion that there is "no a-priori reason to believe that [nonliterate] cultures are unable to produce great music or art" deserves to be discussed at length. For now, I will say only that it all depends on how you define the word "great."

Literary Politics

TO THE EDITOR:

Thomas L. Jeffers justly admires Alfred Kazin's enthusiasm for American literature as well as his sentimental, if occasionally self-admiring, view of American literary culture [Books in Review, November 2003]. But Mr. Jeffers is overly generous when he describes Kazin's hatred of the Reagan era and advocacy of socialism as merely "a badly controlled romanticism."

Reagan's support of capitalism and freedom directly promoted the liberation of literary critics in the Soviet bloc. Here in America, where critics work for themselves rather than for the government, Reagan's vision perhaps embittered some literati who craved socialist rule and the accompanying bureaucratic authority to assign literary remuneration and acclaim.

HANNAH STRAUSS
Baltimore, Maryland

THOMAS L. JEFFERS writes:

As I tried to make clear in my review, I like Kazin's enthusiasm but not his sometime sentimentality, which indeed had a soft spot for socialism. Perhaps I could have been sterner about how much he misunderstood Reagan's achievements in defense of the correlative freedoms

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of the market and of the mind.

That some politically engaged American and European writers, tired of being Shelley's "unacknowledged legislators," have coveted the powers of Soviet-era commissars is a truth that ought to be universally recognized, though (no surprise) they and their academic minions usually deny it. Happily, Hannah Strauss sees through such denials.

Charter Schools

TO THE EDITOR:

In his review of *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning* [Books in Review, November 2003], Leslie Lenkowsky expresses concern that Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom "dismiss perhaps too quickly the charge that [charter] schools succeed in some measure by 'creaming off' the most motivated parents and students."

But Mr. Lenkowsky's concern is misplaced. The Thernstroms show that students who enroll in these schools are not selected on the basis of test scores, grades, or teacher recommendations, and performed no better than average in the schools from which they came. Nor did these students seem to have wealthier or better-educated parents.

Studies have shown that charter schools and voucher programs do not siphon off those students who could make public schools better, as some teachers and their union leaders fear. To the contrary, such programs appear to stimulate the schools from which these students escape to compete and improve.

JACKSON TOBY
Highland Park, New Jersey

LESLIE LENKOWSKY writes:

Jackson Toby is correct: the data, including those the Thernstroms provide, do not suggest that charter schools and voucher programs are succeeding because they take the best-performing students away from the public schools. All the more reason, then, why one wishes the Thernstroms had presented a more extended discussion of this material in terms that laymen might understand. Such a discussion could usefully have raised the question of whether measures of parental education or wealth adequately capture the nuances of "family culture" that, according to *No Excuses*, make so large a difference in the educational achievement of children from minority groups.

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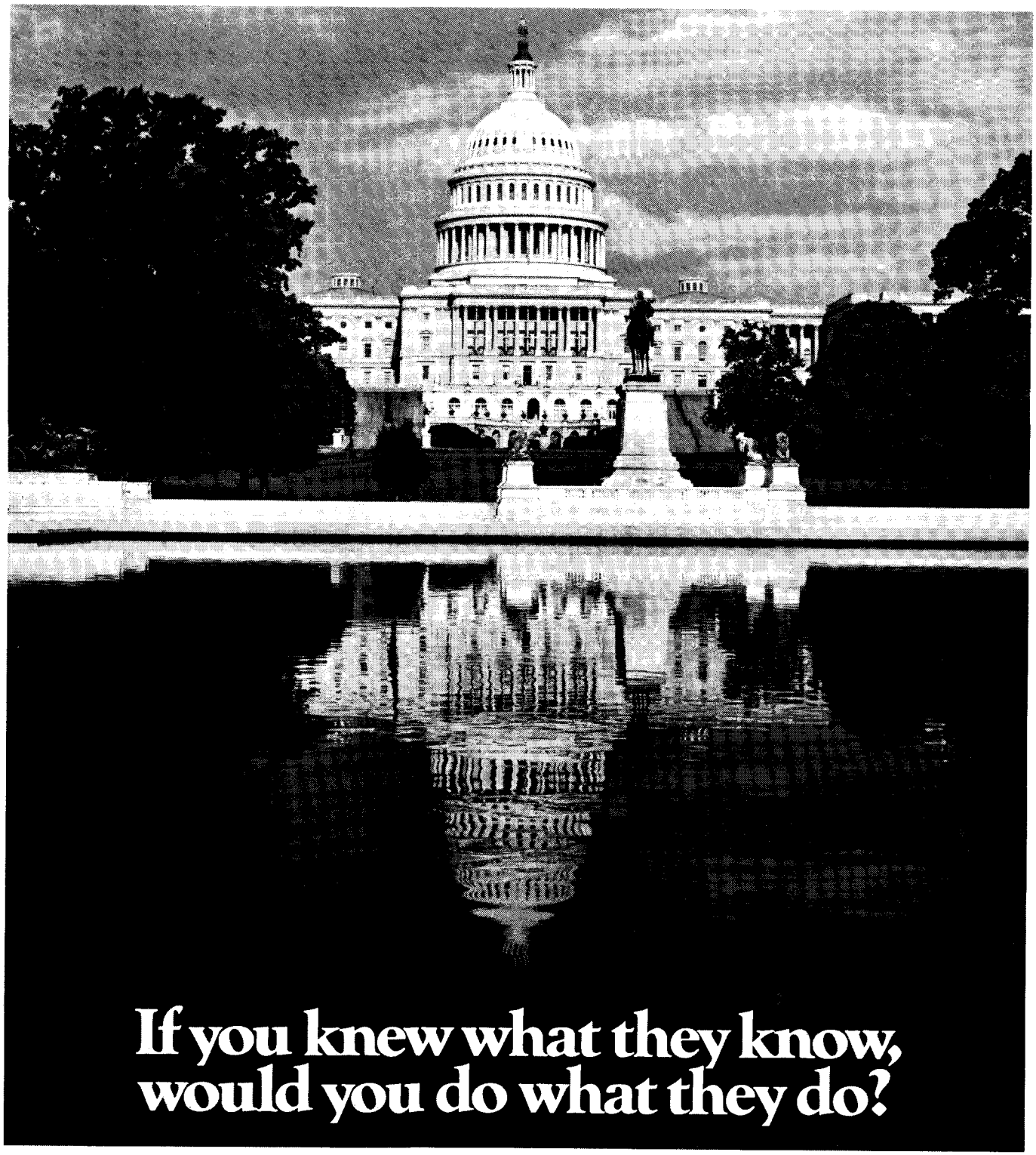

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Commentary
February 2004

Is Bush a Conservative?

Daniel Casse

By the end of 2003, after months of falling popularity and an unceasing barrage of criticism from Democratic presidential aspirants, George W. Bush suddenly seemed to be leading a charmed life. His surprise visit to U.S. troops in Baghdad over the Thanksgiving holiday introduced a note of high confidence and inspiration. Two weeks later, the world was treated to footage of a helpless and disheveled Saddam Hussein in American custody. Although attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq continued, their ferocity diminished amid promising signs that the battle to rebuild Iraq and fight terrorism elsewhere was on course. Within days of Saddam Hussein's capture came the announcement that Muammar Qaddafi had agreed to open his program for amassing nuclear weapons to international inspection. That same week, France, Germany, and Russia, persistent opponents of the Iraq war, acceded to American requests to forgive a portion of Iraqi debts. By mid-December, a CBS poll showed 59 percent of Americans approving of the way the President was handling Iraq—the highest level since early July.

At home, there was still more good news for the White House. In late November, the Commerce Department reported that the economy had grown at a startling 8.2 percent in the third quarter—the highest level in nearly two decades and a figure that exceeded even the most optimistic projections. There followed a cascade of other positive economic announcements. Inflation and interest rates were at their lowest point in decades. Productivity was historically high. Housing starts were soaring. Manufacturing, only recently thought to be disappearing from the America landscape, hit its highest level in twenty years.

Congress, meanwhile, had passed a bipartisan overhaul of Medicare that, while highly controversial, was clearly a political victory for the President. Flush with this legislative success, in late December the White House released word that it was considering an overhaul of Social Security—and possibly re-establishing manned flight to the moon.

Is everybody happy, then? Hardly. For one thing, not since Richard Nixon has there been a Republican occupant of the White House who has provoked such naked antipathy from his political enemies on the Left. Bill and Hillary Clinton generated their own fevered response from the angriest and most conspiratorial corners of the Republican Right. But what is striking about today's liberal hatred of George Bush is not how shrill it is, but rather how even the most extreme outbursts have been fully embraced by mainstream Democratic politicians and journalists.

Daniel Casse *is a senior director of the White House Writers Group, a Washington, D.C. communications firm. His articles in* Commentary *include "An Emerging Republican Majority?" (January 2003) and "Bush and the Republican Future" (March 2001).*

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But criticism of the President has not been confined to Democrats or the Left. For the past year, a chorus of dissent has arisen as well among some conservative pundits and intellectuals—the very group one might have thought would rush to the defense of a President under assault by his liberal antagonists. In a particularly harsh and surprising condemnation, the talk-radio host Rush Limbaugh told his listeners in December that Bush's legacy to the nation would be the greatest increase in domestic spending, and one of the greatest setbacks for liberty, in modern times. "This may be compassionate," warned Limbaugh, playing on Bush's 2000 campaign slogan, "but it is not 'conservatism' at all."

To be sure, conservative discontent with President Bush is likely to have few if any political consequences in the short term; unlike his father before him, George W. Bush will win the Republican nomination unopposed. Despite grumbling among some conservatives in the House of Representatives, no splinter group of disaffected Republicans seems set to take on the cause of Bush's Democratic opponent the way some embraced Clinton in 1992. Still, Bush's ability to remain a popular Republican President while causing so much dismay on both Left and Right does demand an assessment of the direction in which he has been taking the GOP and the country. Should he be reelected this fall, he will remain not only a controversial figure but possibly one of the most consequential Presidents we have had in the modern era.

THAT BUSH should engender so much antipathy among liberals and Democrats is hardly surprising. Among activists, for whom the fundamental legitimacy of the Bush presidency remains in doubt to this day, the bitter, prolonged battle over Florida ballots in November 2000 still deeply rankles. Never mind the thorough study of the 61,000 disputed ballots by *USA Today* and the Knight Ridder chain, with its ringing conclusion that "Bush would have won by 1,665 votes—more than triple his official 537-vote margin—if every dimple, hanging chad, and mark on the ballots had been counted as votes." Despite such findings, Democratic leaders have continued to treat the Florida vote as a monumental act of injustice. As recently as December 2003, Terry McAuliffe, the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, declared that "Al Gore won the state of Florida in 2000, and we should never forget it." "We had more votes. We won," chimed in Senator John Edwards at a party rally last month.

A similar air of unreality, not to say irrationalism, hangs over much of the liberal and left-wing case against Bush. When Bill Clinton ran against the incumbent Bush, Sr. in 1992, the Democrats put together a partisan but compelling case: the economy was in recession; Bush was ignoring health care; and he had failed to be tough enough abroad, leaving Saddam Hussein in power and going easy on the Chinese leaders who had crushed dissent in Tiananmen Square. By contrast, today's critics are conspicuous for their lack of sustained argument. Though all of the Democratic contenders want to repeal at least some of Bush's tax cuts, none has offered a serious economic plan. Alarmed by the growing federal-budget deficit, they present no program to reform domestic spending; indeed, most argue that the country should be spending even more on education, the environment, and health care.

Democrats were divided last year on whether to support the war in Iraq. But, aside from mourning the loss of American life in Iraq, it is not clear what alternative policy Bush's critics now have in mind. Nearly all speak of "increased security" and greater "internationalization" of the war on terrorism, but as the early Democratic debates attest, these have simply become liberal shibboleths, unsubstantiated by thought-out ideas.

More often, the case against Bush from the Left has degenerated into an exercise in name-calling and fear-mongering. Jonathan Chait, a journalist whose reputation has grown almost entirely on account of his loudly advertised hatred of the President, recently asserted in passing that "Bush is the worst President in the past 80 years." Not to be outdone, Howard Dean has declared him our "most dangerous President" ever, and both he and Wesley Clark have publicly flirted with crackpot theories about the secret origins of the Iraq war. According to Harold Myerson, writing in the liberal quarterly, the *American Prospect*, Bush "is incomparably more dangerous than Reagan or any other President in this nation's history." To the *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, Bush is a radical who "wants to undo much of the Great Society and the New Deal." Books announcing that Bush is a liar, an imbecile, or a dangerous brute have been published by established journalists and prominently reviewed in reputable journals. Al Gore has associated himself with MoveOn.org, an advocacy group whose website briefly featured a mock political ad depicting images of Hitler followed by images of Bush, with an accompanying text declaring that "1945's war

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crimes" are "2003's foreign policy." The content of websites with flaky names like BushIsAMoron.org, WhoDiesforBushLies.com, or EvilGOPBastards-.com seems little different from the material available at the official site of the Democratic National Committee.

In his new book, *Bush Country*, John Podhoretz has collected and carefully analyzed representative statements from the core liberal critique of Bush, maintaining persuasively that they have become so unmoored from the reality of the President's policies as to take on "the paranoid style of American politics"—the phrase used nearly 40 years ago by the political scientist Richard Hofstader to describe the mentality of the John Birch Society and other fringe elements of the American Right. The result, Podhoretz writes, is an angry opposition that is no longer capable of participating constructively in political debate.

By contrast, whatever may be said of Bush's critics on the Right, they do present a more reasoned set of contentions. Last summer, the columnist George F. Will suggested that, under Bush, American conservatism was undergoing an identity crisis, one that might well end by rendering it incoherent. The crisis, according to Will, was being caused by the policies of the administration and a series of decisions by the purportedly conservative Supreme Court; jointly, these were gnawing at the very foundations of limited government and the preference for market forces over governmental intrusion in economic affairs. In the months since Will raised these doubts about the conservative bona fides of the administration, the murmurs of discontent have turned into a din.

The critics are not Bush-haters; they would likely support his reelection over just about any conceivable Democratic nominee. Still, their discomfort is unmistakable. Speaking for many, Ramesh Ponnuru in *National Review* laid out the brief against the President as of last September:

> Bush has increased the federal role in education, imposed tariffs on steel and lumber, increased farm subsidies, okayed federal regulations on campaign finance and corporate accounting, and expanded the national-service program President Clinton began. Since September 11, he has also raised defense spending, given new powers to law enforcement, federalized airport security, and created a new cabinet department for homeland security. No federal programs have been eliminated, nor has Bush sought any such thing. More people are working for the federal government than at any point since the end of the cold war.

But it was Bush's decision to sign the Medicare-reform law passed by Congress just before Thanksgiving that pushed even quietly skeptical conservatives into open opposition. The new law, projected to cost as much as $2 trillion over the next two decades, is surely the greatest expansion of entitlement spending ever endorsed by a Republican President. The *Wall Street Journal*, in a harsh criticism, called the bill "too expensive a gamble for principled conservatives to support." The supply-side economist Bruce Bartlett described himself as "apoplectic." Major conservative think tanks from the Heritage Foundation to the Cato Institute and the National Center for Policy Analysis all vigorously lobbied against the bill's passage.

By year's end, Bush had become the target of dismissals once reserved by conservatives for the likes of Tip O'Neill or Bill Clinton. "He's a champion big spender," said Stephen Moore of the Club for Growth, while Edward Crane of Cato accused him of causing the "philosophical collapse of the GOP." Andrew Sullivan, a staunch supporter of the President on foreign policy, wrote in *Time* that when it came to domestic affairs, he was "fast becoming a deadbeat dad, living it up for short-term gain while abandoning his children to a life of insecurity and debt." Announcing a new online publication, *Conservative Battleline*, the veteran conservative activist Donald Devine wrote caustically that "The Republican President and party in Congress clearly have no interest in reducing the stifling burden of national government bureaucracy in peoples' daily lives. Someone must represent them."

The noisy sound of ranks breaking ought to be placed in context. Conservative opposition to an incumbent Republican is hardly new. Bush, Sr. was famously confronted by Patrick J. Buchanan, who actually beat him in the New Hampshire primary. Although Buchanan's attempted revival of pre-World War II nationalism never evolved into a potent electoral force, he did help create a small but vocal movement of cultural conservatives who have long been uncomfortable with the modern GOP's affinity for free trade, military intervention abroad, a relatively open immigration policy, and support for Israel. Their views, published regularly in periodicals like the *American Conservative* and *Southern Partisan*, have failed to have a discernible impact on either the Bush administration or the larger conservative movement.

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The new critique, though, is closer to the center and more intellectually sophisticated. Does it signal an end to the conservative electoral coalition that, with whatever internal fissures, has existed as a force in the country since the days of Ronald Reagan? In the opinion of Kevin Hassett, a free-market economist who served as a close adviser to Senator John McCain during the latter's 2000 presidential run, it certainly should. "Conservatives might shudder at the thought of 'President Howard Dean,'" Hassett has written, "but it is hard to see exactly what has been gained if the strategy employed to keep him out of the White House is to adopt all of his [big-government] policies in advance."

Some Bush supporters have taken a more sanguine view. Fred Barnes of the *Weekly Standard*, for one, argues that Bush is to be understood as a "big-government conservative": that is, one who wants to use the resources and imprimatur of the federal government to advance conservative ends. In Barnes's judgment, Bush has simply recognized that Americans do not mind big government, and has adjusted accordingly. More important, Barnes thinks, is that Bush is *personally* very conservative. Unlike his father, he has no history of association with moderate or liberal ("Rockefeller") Republicans, is comfortable with cultural and religious conservatives, and has never shown any eagerness to find common ground with liberal Democrats.

Barnes is on to something, but his terms may be too narrow. The real question is not whether Bush is betraying the conservative movement but whether he is redefining the meaning of conservative governance—and if so, in what direction.

OBVIOUSLY, THE events of September 11, 2001 confronted Bush's presidency with a new set of priorities, both foreign and domestic. Partly in response to those events, Bush has no less obviously departed from the trajectory of traditional conservative thinking, and in a manner that goes beyond such touchstones as balanced budgets and governmental minimalism. Nevertheless, it is impossible to ignore the ways in which the sometimes surprising and unorthodox politics he has been advancing, albeit unevenly, have created a new type of conservative agenda.

Foreign policy is the starting point. Over the previous decade, the prevailing contention among most Republicans and conservatives had been that the United States could not be the world's policeman but must choose its involvements carefully. The so-called Powell doctrine, according to which military engagement should be pursued only with overwhelming force and with a clear exit strategy in mind, had become the accepted view among most leaders on the Right—including George W. Bush. Throughout the 1990's, Republicans joined Democrats in persistently and aggressively cutting the Pentagon budget.

Faced with different realities after September 11, Bush and his advisers have effectively crafted a new American posture, one that tacitly rejects the Powell doctrine, broadens the definition of the American national interest and hence the criteria of intervention, and has developed a reliance on the sophistication of our weaponry rather than on the number of men on the ground.

The simplistic shorthand adopted by the media to characterize (and/or demonize) the Bush approach is to call it a triumph of "neoconservatism." And it is true enough that, like today's administration strategists, neoconservative thinkers in the late 1970's and 1980's strove to redefine the role of American power at a time of retreat and growing isolationism; it is also true that a number of neoconservatives hold policy positions in the Bush administration itself. That said, it is necessary to add that Bush's policy choices have been driven less by ideology than by the clear-cut need to combat terrorism and the states that sponsor it, and to confront rogue regimes whose very existence represents a threat to freedom and security. In so doing, Bush and his team have devised a policy that breaks with almost every single tenet of yesterday's prevailing model of liberal multilateralism, and that exhibits an energy and coherence missing during the Bush, Sr. and even during the Reagan administrations.

Of course, many conservatives distinguish between Bush's muscular posture toward the world, which they applaud, and his deviation from the dogma of balanced budgets. But here Bush is less out of step with conservative practice (as opposed to conservative theory) than his critics contend. Writing in the *Washington Post* this past November, the libertarian analyst David Boaz complained that the administration's domestic agenda is "a far cry from the less-government, 'leave-us-alone' conservatism of Ronald Reagan." Yet this is what the same David Boaz was writing in August 1982 about the "'leave-us-alone' conservatism" of the Reagan administration:

> Soaring military spending for overseas commitments and the refusal to make significant cuts in most major domestic programs have

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> created the worst deficits in American history. . . . People around the country seem to understand what no one in Washington will admit: the budget is out of control. The growth of government is out of control. . . . Spending in FY [fiscal year] 1983, the first real Reagan budget, will be about $100 billion higher than President's Carter's last full budget.

Nor was Boaz alone at the time. The late Norman Ture, a father of supply-side economics, left his Treasury Department post in protest at what he took to be Reagan's deviation on taxes in 1981. Reagan's own budget director, David Stockman, was similarly shocked into resigning by the President's unwillingness to make steep cuts in spending, a failure of leadership that to Stockman explained, in the subtitle of his 1985 book, "how the Reagan revolution failed."

But what Reagan recognized, and George W. Bush after him, is that, conservative rhetoric to the contrary notwithstanding, balanced budgets and cuts in federal spending are far less important to economic health than is the promotion of growth. This lesson, explained repeatedly over the decades by the *Wall Street Journal*'s late editor Robert L. Bartley, is still regularly forgotten by some conservatives.

In the early 1990's, the obsession with deficit reduction led the first Bush administration to a short-sighted deal with a Democratic Congress to raise taxes. Five years later, Newt Gingrich squandered the authority of his new Republican majority in the House of Representatives by insisting on a showdown with Bill Clinton over cutting spending—a goal that Gingrich held to be so vital and urgent that it necessitated a shutdown of the federal government. Within a few years of Gingrich's disastrously unpopular move, the budget "crisis" of the mid-1990's was completely eliminated by means of economic growth, a booming stock market, and entrepreneurial breakthroughs that were flooding the federal treasury with new revenues.

Given this very recent history, it is remarkable that hysteria over looming deficits should reappear among conservatives as if nothing had been learned. At the end of 2003, the federal deficit was approaching $500 billion, including $50 billion spent on the war in Iraq. Although, numerically, that is the largest deficit in our history, it represents only 4.2 percent of the nation's GDP. Under Reagan, the deficit ran as high as 6 percent of GDP, and it stood at 4.7 percent into the early 1990's. Historically, it is in line with post-recession deficits under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

Nor should the deficit be looked at without reference to the significant pro-growth tax cuts Bush championed and signed last year. Part of this 2003 package was designed to accelerate the reductions in personal income-tax rates passed in 2001; but, by reducing the capital-gains tax rate and the rate on dividends as well, the new Bush package deliberately aims at boosting the fortunes of investors who now make up close to 50 percent of American households. In short, Bush has not merely recapitulated the pro-growth cuts of the Reagan era but greatly expanded their reach. The decision to cut dividend taxes alone, by encouraging companies to return more profits to their stockholders rather than spending on acquisitions, may have contributed significantly to the market surge during 2003.

Is it possible to extrapolate from Bush's record on spending to his other domestic initiatives? While granting that many of the administration's budget decisions were made on the basis of pragmatic necessity, Ramesh Ponnuru warns that conservatives "should not try to dress up this necessity as a coherent philosophy." But there may be a more constructive view to be taken.

The Medicare bill is a case in point. Without doubt, it represents a massive expansion in spending and, with the addition of prescription-drug coverage, amounts to a new entitlement for seniors. No one, however, seriously doubts that this coverage had to be added—even free-market conservatives agree that inclusion of prescription drugs was long overdue. The real issue is whether the legislation permits a fundamental shift in the debate over how a government entitlement like Medicare ought to operate.

To Grace-Marie Turner, a veteran champion of free-market health-care reform, the bill is well worth its high cost. "Tucked away in this huge and hugely expensive legislation," she writes, "are seeds that can lead to transformative changes in the health-care sector." Two such "seeds" are Medical Savings Accounts and experiments to allow private providers to compete for Medicare. The inclusion of such provisions, coupled with the fact that the bill's final draft attracted the support of leading Democrats and the AARP, means that liberal opposition to genuine reform of Medicare has finally been broken.

In this large sense, the bill is a turning point in conservative efforts to challenge the entitlement

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status quo. For nearly twenty years, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Congressman Henry Waxman, and other Washington champions of government-run health care have made increased spending levels the only yardstick by which to measure a President's concern for Medicare; in the process, they have successfully quashed any serious discussion of introducing market forces into Medicare or providing seniors with choices of coverage in the private sector. The Bush legislation hardly resolves the issue, and the reform elements in the bill are too small and are postponed too far into the future; but, going forward, the debate will center at last on whether we are advancing toward market reform quickly enough. This is something conservatives have long argued for but, until now, never achieved.

A similar assessment can be entered for some of Bush's other domestic initiatives, starting with education. The No Child Left Behind legislation, passed during his first year in office, is extremely expensive and much flawed, but it, too, has succeeded in changing the terms of debate. For years, "progress" in education was measured by the expenditure of ever more federal dollars and the appeasement of Washington-based pressure groups—the organizations that former Secretary of Education William J. Bennett called "the blob." The new legislation emphasizes performance standards and school autonomy. As Bennett and Chester E. Finn, Jr. recently summed up the bill's achievements so far, it has done well on standards while leaving much to be desired on school autonomy. Still, today's discussion is surely healthier for education itself, and more in tune with conservative ideals, than the mindless argument over spending levels that dominated federal education policy for so long.

On still other fronts, the outlook is less clear. The creation of a mammoth Department of Homeland Security, for example, can hardly be reassuring to advocates of small government; but it does offer a much-overdue opportunity to reform the isolated and dysfunctional bureaucracies that have long been responsible for our border security, our immigration enforcement, and our public-health apparatus. As for the Sarbanes-Oxley bill launching an array of new regulation of corporate governance, this was something no President could face down in the wake of the Enron and WorldCom scandals; if nothing else, it serves as a barrier to Republican corporatism, an anathema to conservative ideology since the 1950's.

Far more provocative to some conservatives was the speech by Bush in early January urging dramatic reforms to the country's immigration policies. His proposals would make it easier for immigrants to enter the country to fill jobs and for undocumented aliens already here to stay legally. Such initiatives were almost guaranteed to create a firestorm in conservative ranks. For some time, populist figures on the Right like the talk-show host G. Gordon Liddy and the columnist Michelle Malkin have railed against any effort to grant amnesty to illegal aliens; others, including Peter Brimelow and John O'Sullivan (both immigrants themselves), have argued that future surges in immigration from Hispanic countries will unacceptably dilute the nation's cultural unity.

But there is a strong economic case to be made for increasing immigration to the U.S. Despite the recent surge in productivity and the relatively high rate of unemployment, most economists believe that future growth will depend on the availability of both high- and low-skilled workers from elsewhere. There is also a moral dimension to the immigration issue. Is it really right to track down and oust workers and their families who, though here illegally, are otherwise law-abiding residents, who provide much-needed labor, and whose families and children are often deeply integrated into their communities? What is certain is that a new policy that attempts to promote immigration and legitimizes those who have come here illegally will force the conservative movement to grapple with an issue it has long swept under the rug, and will itself help to redefine Bush's coalition.

Finally, there is a set of policy decisions that are hard to defend on any principled grounds. These include Bush's support for the anti-market 2002 farm bill, the protectionist steel tariffs, the utterly ineffective campaign-finance reform bills, and the pork-laden energy bill of 2003. True, there is no evidence that Bush was passionate about any of them; but his willingness to support such policies, even for tactical purposes, is clear evidence that his conservative themes have yet to coalesce into an easily summarizable vision. Where Reagan had a simple message—stronger defense plus tax cuts—and Gingrich his Contract for America, Bush has yet to offer the country an equivalently streamlined philosophy.

WHAT HE has offered is something no less necessary: a very bold, and very ambitious, reordering of conservative priorities. The list alone is impressive. Bush has launched an unprecedented campaign against global terrorism and tyranny. He has barely paused before using federal resources to reshape large swaths of our education and health-care programs. In the midst of a weak

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economy and in the face of unrelenting criticism, he has pursued and signed the third-largest tax cuts in history. He has significantly increased the scope of federal power to protect domestic security while, just two years after foreign terrorists attacked the country, contemplating a new openness to foreigners who want to live and work here. He has willingly entered fractious cultural debates on stem-cell research and homosexual marriage, making it clear that he believes government cannot be indifferent to such questions. He is entertaining the idea of remaking Social Security by offering individuals private accounts.

If this loose collection of initiatives and preferences is causing a conservative identity crisis, as George Will would have it, that may be because American conservatism has been in search of an identity ever since Ronald Reagan left the public stage. To most conservatives, George H.W. Bush, in raising taxes and in implicitly impugning his predecessor by calling for a kinder, gentler America, was not the best steward of the Reagan legacy. But by the early 1990's, with the threat of Soviet Communism having disappeared, the purpose of conservative politics had become uncertain. The old mission so memorably defined by William F. Buckley, Jr.—that the job of conservatives was "to stand athwart history yelling 'stop'"—was seeming insufficient in a world where, even after eight years of Reaganism, the government was continuing to grow and Democrats still dominated the Washington debate.

Newt Gingrich's theory was that the purpose of the next Republican revolution was to undermine the welfare-state mentality of the Democrat-controlled Congress by reforming the rules that protected incumbents. He succeeded brilliantly in reforming the rules, but the new conservative-Republican majority in the House was soon at a loss about what to do next, especially with Bill Clinton in the White House as a still-popular and indefatigable adversary.

Bush's own effort to reinvent the conservative alliance began, in his 2000 campaign, with the slogan of compassionate conservatism. To some, this signaled a reintroduction of his father's kinder, gentler philosophy. To others, it captured who Bush said he was: a "reformer with results," someone willing to use the power of government to advance conservative ends. But whatever the slogan, his first year-and-a-half in office was hardly encouraging. Proposals on taxes, education, and faith-based communities looked like compromises and half-measures. Compassionate conservatism was no replacement for the real thing.

As so many have noted, September 11 gave Bush a new sense of personal purpose. At the same time, it may also have given his brand of political conservatism a new lease on life. Today his conservative critics, focused on increased spending and larger government, do not see this. They are still measuring by the Reaganesque barometer of conservative purity. "Government *is* the problem," Reagan proclaimed in one of the rhetorical high points of his first inaugural address. (The Reagan reality, as we have seen, was something else again.) Today, however, with the country at war and all of us highly dependent for our security on government intelligence, law enforcement, and even health-care monitoring, the blanket distrust of government no longer is an odd conservative rallying-cry.

Besides, in advancing conservative ends, the credo of small government also has its limitations. The welfare reform of the late 1990's was a conservative victory—ending a pernicious federal entitlement and the corrosive disincentives to work that came with it. But most states ended up spending more than before on welfare, increasing payments and investing in the training of social workers charged with a smaller case load. The result was larger government; was the triumph any less a conservative triumph for that? Similarly, such conservative causes as school vouchers, modernized weapons systems, and privatized Social Security all require expanding the role of government.

Conservatives have long avoided acknowledging this tension, which is now at the heart of the conflict between Bush and his critics on the Right. What it comes down to is that, for Bush, there are conservative goals that take precedence over limiting the reach of government. Of course, this shift in priorities is easily misunderstood or distorted. In one of its rare efforts to explain the Republican party to its readers, the *New York Times* editorialized at the end of the year that "the two halves of Republican policy no longer fit together. A political majority that believes in big government for people and little or no government for corporations has produced an unsustainable fiscal policy that combines spending on social programs with pork and tax cuts for the rich."

But there are more cogent and less demagogic ways of putting this. Michael Barone, likewise writing at the end of the year, suggested that Bush has successfully replaced the conservative touchstones of small government and spending cuts with the bolder, more inspirational ideas of choice and accountability. That these are also the values most cherished in the world of business, and by today's consumers, is

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no accident. As the columnist David Brooks has observed, the "ownership society" is a hallmark of Bush's politics, appealing to Americans who want to be rewarded for self-reliance and responsibility.

To these two themes of choice and accountability, I would add a third: not big government but strong government. The notion of a strong central government sounds like a bitter pill for conservatives to swallow; but strong government need not be intrusive government, or even all that large. Indeed, the central error of *liberalism* over the past two decades has been to make government both large and weak—that is, ineffectual and unworthy of public respect. By contrast, a primary goal of conservative governance ought to be to restore to government the power to defend the nation's interests while providing citizens with the services they want in the most efficient manner possible. Liberalism has failed at that task, and economic libertarianism has little or no interest in it. Hence the opportunity for a new era of conservative leadership.

Looked at in this way, Bush's focus on the global expansion of democracy, the ongoing war against terrorism, economic growth (rather than government spending levels), and deconstructing domestic-policy monopolies (Medicare, Social Security, teachers' unions, etc.) does rise to the level of a new conservative approach to government. In his insightful memoir of working inside George W. Bush's White House, David Frum remarks that "Bush was not a lightweight. He was, rather, a very unfamiliar type of heavyweight." The same could be said for his politics: an unfamiliar type of conservatism, but one that will likely define the American political scene for some time to come.

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Our Game with North Korea

Arthur Waldron

For the world generally, few possibilities can be more frightening than that North Korea will succeed in developing nuclear weapons. Possession of such an arsenal will certainly accelerate the existing arms race in Asia, tipping the balance in favor of similar initiatives in South Korea and, most importantly, Japan. That is worrying enough; but matters would not end there. Pyongyang is a crucial node in the international network of proliferation that already includes China and Russia as primary providers, Pakistan and North Korea as active disseminators, and Iran and perhaps Saudi Arabia among the final consumers. No less unsettling is the prospect that North Korea will sell nuclear weapons to international terrorist groups.

Clearly this is an issue of profound concern to the United States—though not, it must be added, one that we can resolve on our own, or for which credible military options exist. Actual strikes against North Korea pose a real danger of unleashing a second Korean war in which tens of millions might die. But diplomatic approaches are no more promising: people who know North Korea do not believe that state will ever give up its nuclear weapons, no matter who asks or who threatens.

If no good solutions exist to these problems, there are nevertheless mistakes that can be avoided and ways to make even a fragile peace more likely. Unfortunately, the trend of American diplomacy since the end of last summer shows signs of veering in the wrong direction. Even as talks with Pyongyang were collapsing amid recriminations, the President assured us that a peaceful negotiated solution was possible and perhaps even not all that difficult. When North Korea threatened a nuclear test, Colin Powell noted, "They've said things like that before." Whatever may account for such inappropriate-seeming nonchalance, there is now a detectable shift in U.S. policy away from our initial demands for North Korea's actual disarmament toward the possible acceptance of something less.

That is exactly the trajectory followed in its time by the Clinton administration, with disastrous results. Unless this trend is corrected, we may find that what we thought was the road to peace in Korea leads not to resolution but to an ever more nightmarish future.

All started bravely enough. At the outset of George W. Bush's presidency, our clearly articulated goal was to bring the North Koreans to the negotiating table and force them to accept the dismantling of Pyongyang's nuclear program "in a verifiable and irreversible way." Then, in the President's State of the Union Address of 2002, North Korea was named along with Iran and Iraq as a member of the "Axis of Evil." By April 2003, with U.S. forces occupying Baghdad, the Bush policy

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appeared to be bearing fruit: as representatives of the United States and North Korea met in Beijing with the Chinese, the British *Guardian* newspaper reported that "the swift U.S.-led victory in Iraq had prompted North Korea to talk."

By mid-summer, however, with control in Iraq now looking like a shaky proposition, Washington was seeming much less invincible. A few weeks before the opening in Beijing of six-party talks involving the United States, China, Russia, both Koreas, and Japan, Under Secretary of State John Bolton delivered, in Seoul, a rigorous analysis blaming the nuclear problem squarely on North Korea's Kim Jong Il, whom he described correctly as a "tyrannical dictator." But then the White House distanced itself from its own diplomat's remarks, and Bolton, the specialist theoretically in charge of our arms-control policy, was soon playing a less than central role in setting strategy. This was a portent of things to come.

On August 27, the six-party talks, on which Washington was evidently staking great hopes, got under way. They were, by all accounts, far from smooth: tensions were high in the negotiating chambers, and a seemingly unbreakable deadlock quickly developed between, on the one hand, Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington and, on the other, Moscow, Beijing, and Pyongyang. The only product of the talks was a vague agreement to convene again.

In Washington, little was said publicly. But, in spite of the powerful evidence provided by the talks themselves that a diplomatic solution would likely prove elusive if not impossible, the search for such a solution intensified. Hard-line rhetoric was out, and our negotiating position began to wobble.

Domestic politics was probably the decisive factor. Understandably, the administration was not eager to let North Korea join Iraq as a possible target for the President's Democratic rivals, among whom the greatest traction was being achieved by those most critical of Bush's foreign policy. The changed circumstances then led to two potentially treacherous steps. First, the United States subtly softened its position on an important North Korean condition: we would no longer reject outright Pyongyang's demand for a unilateral security guarantee, but rather were suggesting that such a guarantee might in fact be provided, if in a multilateral fashion. Second, we began an utterly transparent attempt to woo China over to our side and to enlist Beijing's good offices in pressuring the North Koreans.

For its part, North Korea did nothing to relax its stance. During the talks, it had spoken of carrying out a possible nuclear test. In early October, it announced that it had extracted enough plutonium from reactor fuel rods to produce perhaps five bombs in addition to the one or two it was already believed to possess. Later, Pyongyang threatened to initiate a war if further talks either broke down or became indefinitely prolonged.

American allies watched this drama closely. Japanese in particular were disturbed. To the influential commentator Yoichi Funabashi, it seemed more than possible that the U.S. might end up accepting the North Korean nuclear capability as fact, just as it had done previously in the cases of India and Pakistan. "When that happens," he wrote, "only Japan will face the danger of being totally exposed." A commentator on Australian radio speculated that unless Japan's absolute requirement of North Korean nuclear disarmament were met, it might well be compelled to regard the American guarantee to provide nuclear deterrence to Tokyo as worthless, and proceed to "develop the bomb in a matter of months." The speed with which Japan seemed to be breaking a longstanding taboo on discussion of its own nuclear potential was a clear sign of how rattled American allies had become. Although the American ambassador to Japan protested that "There is a diplomatic solution to the situation in North Korea," his reassurance was hardly reassuring.

WHEN BUSH woos, he does not stint. In late October, the *Financial Times* of London featured a photograph of the American President and China's Hu Jintao; they were dressed in identical Chinese costumes, and they were smiling and shaking hands. On December 8, the President, in a muddled statement the exact meaning of which is still being construed, warned the democratically elected president of Taiwan not to hold any referendum on future relations with China to which China itself objected. At the same time, Bush referred to China and the United States as, according to the *New York Times*, "'partners in diplomacy' committed to stamping out terrorism and fostering stability on the Korean peninsula."

In return, then, for our more or less explicit agreement with Chinese demands concerning Taiwan, we were evidently hoping that China would somehow bell the North Korean cat. Quite apart from the apparent undermining of a friend, did this make sense? The answer is no—not least because, rightly or wrongly, Beijing itself is far less concerned about the North Korean nuclear program than are the United States and its friends and allies.

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North Korea is one of the dwindling band of real Communist dictatorships. It is also the regime for which China sacrificed almost a million of its own soldiers in the Korean war. China's leaders continue to commemorate that conflict not as the avoidable tragedy it was but rather as a great Chinese victory over American imperialism. What is certainly true is that, since the death of Kim Il Sung and the end of the Soviet Union, North Korea has become more dependent on China than ever before.

Surely, then (one can hear the logical response in Washington), Beijing realizes how dangerous North Korean nuclear weapons are, and surely this confirms the wisdom of cooperating with Beijing to solve the problem? Alas, things are not so simple. Yes, the North Korean nuclear program is a threat, including preeminently to Beijing. Some Chinese understand this: a delegation of Chinese scholars told their American colleagues in October that "North Korea's nuclear program is a greater danger to world stability than the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq." But other Chinese disagree. Near year's end, the Chinese foreign minister, Li Zhaoxing, was quoted as stating that "we believe the Korean issue is between the DPRK [North Korea] and the United States. China is merely to play a mediating role, actively and patiently." Still others evidently think that China has a positive interest in a North Korea that creates trouble for the United States and its friends.

In any event, in the years of the "agreed framework" during the mid- to late 1990's, Beijing declined to share with successive American administrations the knowledge it almost certainly possessed of North Korea's clandestine nuclear program, and in the most recent round of talks it has consistently named Washington, not Pyongyang, as the problem. Evidently, those now setting the course in Beijing see an advantage to drawing in the United States, South Korea, Japan, and other powers as guarantors of a status quo in North Korea that, while almost certainly not in *their* interests, is thought to be in China's. In the meantime, Washington's all-too-obvious hope that Beijing will ride to the rescue has given China a degree of leverage on unrelated issues that it is exploiting to the full.

But let us suppose that Beijing were to decide differently, and that, for reasons of its own security, it did see a need to stop Pyongyang's nuclear program. What could it do? Unfortunately, not much.

Contrary to what some seem to imagine, Beijing cannot simply tell Pyongyang what to do. Koreans know themselves; they are particularly mindful of the fact that, under the Qing dynasty, they were a Chinese vassal state, and they intend to be one never again. As for bringing pressure to bear, China might, of course, halt all economic aid to Pyongyang—but this would probably cause the collapse of the regime and send millions of impoverished North Koreans fleeing into China. Or Beijing could conceivably attempt to rearrange the North Korean political leadership, perhaps by means of a military coup—which would probably fail and would certainly alienate, for a very long time, Koreans both North and South.

Might China actually use force? That seems most unlikely. A straightforward attack would probably lead to a ghastly and unsuccessful war, with South Korea perhaps drawn in on Pyongyang's side. Special-operations forces? Such commandos would have little more chance of actually finding, let alone destroying, North Korean weapons than would Americans, and they would be every bit as likely to be cornered and killed in the maze of well-defended tunnels that crisscross North Korea.

Try as we may, then, to persuade China to deliver us from our predicament, we must consider the likelihood that it will not, and therefore what our own approach should be. At the moment, that approach rests on two words, both beginning with "d": diplomacy and defense.

The diplomatic scenario has been spelled out in minute detail in scores of places, from policy papers to the pages of foreign-policy journals like *Foreign Affairs*. It boils down to the hope that North Korean nuclear and missile capabilities can be removed through an intricate dance in which trust is gradually established and the regime in Pyongyang then proves willing, through a series of ever more consequential exchanges, to give up its military programs entirely in return for security guarantees and massive aid.

The Clinton administration carried out just such a dance. It led to the 1994 "agreed framework," which provided for disarmament in phases, with the West supplying aid that included fuel oil and two nuclear reactors ostensibly not capable of producing weapons. "While that was all going on," the long-time Asia specialist Richard Solomon recently attested on the PBS *News Hour*, "we thought the situation was improving." But, unbeknownst to the White House, "the North Koreans had started a covert nuclear program . . . and the dilemma that the Bush administration is facing now is how to deal with a regime that repeatedly violates or does-

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n't implement agreements they've reached." Diplomacy, in other words, failed.

What about defense? Every strategist knows that, by itself, even a good defense is not enough. But the sad fact is that, while their Chinese and North Korean adversaries boast impressive offensive capabilities, America's democratic allies in Asia are limited to a not very robust defense and to the hope that the United States will step in, at massive cost, to save them from any attack. This sort of imbalance is highly dangerous, and invites testing.

South Korea was saved from Communist domination some 50 years ago by dint of much bloodshed, including the blood of Americans. Today its capital, Seoul, faces a life-and-death threat not just from the missiles and nuclear weapons under discussion here but even more urgently from huge numbers of North Korean artillery pieces, emplaced so as to be able to destroy that city simply with barrages of conventional munitions. This threat has existed for years. Against it, Seoul has no defense, although it is beginning to develop, with our reluctant acquiescence, a deterrent force of conventional ballistic missiles with a range limited to North Korea.

Japan's security is similarly tenuous. For all its economic and technological might, Japan does not possess on its own the military wherewithal to counter the threats growing in the lands and waters around it, not the threat from North Korea, and certainly not the one from China.

Taiwan, which outstrips Australia in population and number of men under arms, and is only slightly smaller in GDP, is likewise powerless to strike back against attack. In its case, such an attack would come from a China that has targeted on it some 496 ballistic missiles, already in place.

When Japan and Taiwan ask us how they should react to the steady and threatening buildup of offensive weapons against them, our response has been: "Don't worry, we are developing defensive systems that will stop all of those missiles before they can hurt you." Then we call on them to pour their resources into this enterprise. But the enterprise will never work, or at least not completely. Like its close analogue, anti-submarine warfare, missile defense can be effective, but it can never be 100-percent effective. If one North Korean Nodong missile of the type currently in service were to slip through the missile-defense shield that Japan has just decided to begin building, and were it to hit, say, one of Japan's 53 nuclear generating stations, even with a conventional warhead, the result would be disaster.

Nor is the United States itself capable of stopping the ballistic-missile threat that already exists in Asia. Suppose that, for some reason, North Korea or China began launching the missiles each now possesses. What could we do, other than fire missiles back and thus catastrophically escalate the war while inviting attack on the continental United States? Even if we were to send both the entire U.S. Navy and Air Force into Asia, such deployments, however massive, would be powerless to stop the missiles or prevent the damage they would inflict. Worse still, U.S. forces would themselves become targets of missiles, resulting in a wider war of a scale and destructiveness that is difficult to imagine.

Our own security depends on a balance of power in Asia, to which our alliances with Japan and South Korea are crucial. Yet even as the conventional and nuclear capabilities of their adversaries grow alarmingly, the United States is unable credibly to defend either of those two treaty allies, or our democratic friend Taiwan, and neither can they defend themselves on their own. This fact imperils the alliances themselves, as it would any alliance. It is no accident that our two closest historical allies, France and Britain, have both insisted on maintaining their own, entirely autonomous nuclear forces—as has Israel.

THIS BRINGS us back to China. In effect, Beijing is seeking to use America's current difficulties to shift the balance of power in its favor. In recent decades China has repeatedly sought a multipolar global arrangement, one in which it could amplify its power by belonging to no alliance itself but maneuvering opportunistically as circumstances dictated. The United States and its allies currently prevent Beijing from doing this as much as it would like, but now the American hope for a Chinese role in "fixing" Korea has created an opportunity to practice a recommendation first made by the great strategist Sun Zi some two-and-a-half millennia ago: *fa jiao*, "attack alliances."

We, for our part, have played into China's hands by increasingly assessing our moves in the Korea negotiations more by the reactions they elicit from our potential adversaries, namely Pyongyang and Beijing, than by the effect they have on our allies Tokyo and Seoul and on Taiwan. Hence the danger: that the Bush administration, facing powerful political pressure to "do something" about the problem, will be tempted to cease insisting on a treaty that will actually serve the security needs of our friends and allies. Rather, we may settle for an-

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other sham treaty—one that has been concluded in proper multilateral fashion and bears the signatures of the leading states but that at best defers the central and critical issue of North Korean disarmament until some unspecified point in the future.

So far, at least, the Bush White House seems not to have stepped over this fateful line. The main evidence is the clear difficulty in arranging a second meeting of the six-party negotiations, initially announced for December 2003, later for January 2004. As host of the talks, China wanted at least the appearance of success, and so it reportedly drafted a plan according to which the United States and its allies would assist North Korea diplomatically and economically at once, receiving in return vague assurances of disarmament somewhere down the line. But at year's end Washington had not bitten, instead continuing to insist on "verifiable and irreversible" disarmament.

This was encouraging, but temporary. The problem remains very much in place, and so does the temptation for the White House to continue on the path of embracing China. If in fact we do end up accepting a sham treaty, the trust upon which our alliances rest will be shattered and the alliances themselves, crucial to our own security, jeopardized. Without a credible structure to secure them, our allies will have little choice but to try to ensure their security by the uncoordinated and unilateral development of their own potent offensive capabilities. The result would be the disintegration of the fundamental structures on which depend both regional and American security, and their replacement by an international free-for-all.

What then should we do? The answer has two parts, one general, the other specific to Korea.

In Asia as in Europe, America has a primary interest in peace. That is best assured by a local balance of power, one designed to prevent the outbreak of a small war that can grow to involve us (like the Nazi invasion of Poland, or the Japanese annexation of Manchuria). Maintaining such a balance involves a third word beginning with "d," albeit one that is scarcely ever heard in discussions of the North Korean issue: deterrence.

States are prevented from attacking others not by economic ties, not by treaties or confidence-building measures, and not even by advanced missile defenses, but by fear—fear that the country to be attacked possesses the capacity to inflict unacceptable damage on the attacker. That is a capacity available to both our potential adversaries, China and North Korea, but denied by conscious American policy to our allies and friends.

The most prudent thing for us to do now is therefore to strengthen the deterrent, which is to say the offensive, powers of our allies and, by creating a regional balance, greatly increase the odds *against* war. This must be done with steadiness and deliberation, and above all cooperatively, but essentially it means working with our friends and allies to develop a genuinely shared offensive capability such as NATO possessed during the cold war. The consequent ability to negotiate from strength would almost certainly increase the possibility of a peaceful solution.

This, however, is not a popular position these days. Rather, we are regularly told that instead of building strength, we should practice military restraint, in which case the Chinese and North Koreans will assuredly reciprocate by restraining themselves in turn. Just so, during the cold war, many voices suggested that the appropriate response to the Soviet missile buildup was to limit our own military, thus setting an example that Moscow would emulate.

The prescription did not work then and is unlikely to work now. The USSR continued to build forces even after it had matched what we possessed, and China and North Korea are behaving similarly. Far from mutual restraint, today we face an arms race in Asia that, by shifting the balance of power, brings with it the possibility that the United States will be forced actively to intervene, just as it had to do on the Korean peninsula so many decades ago at such great and unnecessary cost.

As for Korea specifically, it is important to grasp that the North, upon which our attention is tightly focused, is *not* the primary source of the new and dangerous military imbalance. The real source is China. Hence, the fundamental strategic question is not whether North Korea will be disarmed but whether China, which already possesses ample nuclear and missile forces, will be balanced—by the United States, by Japan, by India, or by a coalition of democratic countries that may now be coming into being.

We should also understand that when it comes to Korea, U.S. and Chinese interests are very much at odds. Here, the fundamental issue is the unification of North and South Korea, a goal to which all Koreans would seem to aspire and which we should support. At roughly 84,000 square miles, a united Korea would be a bit smaller than West Germany before reunification and more than half the size of Japan. Its population and economic power would

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be formidable, and so would be its military, combining the strongest components of today's North and South and possessing strong land and air forces, ballistic missiles, and most likely, nuclear weapons. With the fleet of advanced German diesel submarines that South Korea is now building, a united Korea would have the potential of controlling not only the narrow waters leading to the Sea of Japan from the south but also, and even more importantly, the critical sea routes that lead from the Pacific Ocean and the Yellow Sea into the Bohai Gulf—to Tianjin, the port upon which Beijing itself relies.

Not surprisingly, China fears Korean reunification and seeks to enlist us to prevent it. If we make the mistake of focusing too hard on the nuclear issue and ignore the larger strategic context, Beijing may succeed in getting us to help maintain a divided Korea. Only by keeping the larger situation firmly in mind can we achieve our overriding interest in a regional balance of power. Toward that end, Korean reunification, provided that it is democratic, is something we should be encouraging, and during the period of its emergence we should seek to bring both Koreas closer to ourselves and our existing democratic allies and away from China.

If that is the desired goal, the risk is that the Bush administration may become so wrapped up in a relatively minor corner of the whole situation—Korea—that it will make sacrifices of genuinely major interest. If so, it will truly and disconcertingly be following the path of the Clinton administration during the eighteen months of crisis that culminated in the sham of the "agreed framework."

The situation of the two administrations is eerily similar, and so are the domestic political dynamics. President Clinton was reportedly so sobered by a briefing explaining the requirements of a military operation to end the North Korean program that he abandoned his formerly hard-line rhetoric and turned to negotiations whose outcome was worse than failure. President Bush, for his part, having taken an even harder line, finds himself in a position where the last thing he needs is a crisis in Northeast Asia. One may guess that his advisers are telling him (as Clinton's advisers told their President before) to solve the problem quickly—or, this being nigh-impossible, to create, speedily, the appearance of a solution or of a process leading to one.

There is, unfortunately, much to suggest that the White House is giving such counsels a hearing. For the sake of peace, we must hope that is not so.

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Iran's Nuclear Card

Gary Milhollin & Valerie Lincy

It is now clear that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been operating a string of secret nuclear sites in violation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). In November, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the world organization that is supposed to inspect nuclear sites, passed a resolution condemning Iran for its transgressions and threatening additional measures if it finds "further serious failures" in the country's adherence to the treaty's strictures. The United States pressed for even stronger action. The Europeans and the Russians resisted, and the issue will be revisited by the IAEA in March. The most significant question now at the fore is: what is Iran likely to do next?

Three possibilities present themselves. First, Iran could continue its policy of deception and concealment, which it has been following for the past two decades. Second, Iran could bring itself back into compliance with the NPT and give up its nuclear ambitions. Third, and somewhat paradoxically, Iran could bring itself into compliance with the NPT and still, thanks to loopholes in the treaty, try to develop nuclear weapons. Each course of action has its rewards, and each has its risks. Each also has enough in common with the others that, to an outside observer, it may be hard to discern which of them Iran has actually chosen.

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Let us first consider option one. If Iran chooses deception and stays the course it has been on till now, it will be marching down the trail blazed by its neighbor Iraq. In 1990, at the moment when Saddam Hussein decided to invade and seize Kuwait, he was far along his way to getting the bomb. To achieve such extraordinary progress, Iraq had engaged in a protracted secret program, relying heavily on clandestine imports of raw materials and equipment. It imported uranium from Niger and Brazil and high-speed centrifuge technology and components from Germany to enrich the uranium up to nuclear-weapon grade. It experimented with lasers to enrich uranium. It also imported a small nuclear reactor, ostensibly for civilian research, and used it to generate gram quantities of plutonium, the second key nuclear-bomb fuel. It developed a shielded laboratory complete with "hot cells" for extracting the plutonium from the reactor fuel rods, which was necessary to put the plutonium into weapon-usable form.

Thus far, Iran has followed Iraq every step of the way. Tehran has relied extensively on clandestine imports of raw materials, like uranium compounds from China. It has imported centrifuge technology from Pakistan. It has a laser-research program. It also secretly used a small imported reactor to produce laboratory quantities of plutonium with "hot cells."

Like Iraq before it, Iran has undertaken elaborate measures of concealment to keep its violations

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of the NPT from being discovered. After the first Gulf war, Iraq hid its nuclear facilities from inspectors by demolishing entire buildings and digging up floors to cover traces of forbidden activity. Much the same has been done by the Iranians as their own program has come to light. They have dismantled laser-enrichment equipment and moved it to a hidden storage site. They have sanitized a centrifuge workshop at the Kalaye Electric Company before inspectors could check it for evidence of uranium enrichment.

Though these particular efforts at concealment and deception have been discovered, the essence of the problem is that the IAEA does not know what it does not know. Iran may be continuing to develop the components of nuclear weapons in other, still hidden facilities. Even if inspectors are given free and unfettered access, searching a large country for covert activities can be a difficult if not impossible chore. That will be one factor Iran can bank on if it chooses option one.

BUT IT is also conceivable that Iran might abruptly change direction and choose the course of nuclear renunciation, the path unexpectedly taken by Libya in December. Following secret negotiations with the United States and Britain, Libya's strongman, Muammar Qaddafi, revealed that his country had a secret program for making nuclear-weapon material. Eager to end Western sanctions on his country, and perhaps fearful of the American display of power in Iraq, he pledged to open Libya to more thorough international inspections.

If Iran opts to follow this approach, it would lose the military advantage that it might get under option one. There would, however, be other benefits. Already something of a pariah in the world community, Iran would find itself welcomed back into the fold. Its immediate neighbors, as well as countries farther afield, would no longer regard it with quite so much fear and suspicion. Increased trade with Europe, Russia, and, perhaps, even the United States might be a result. The rising danger of an Israeli or an American preemptive attack on its nuclear facilities, and the risks of a wider war against a superpower, would be obviated.

But Iran's leaders might also consider yet another, third approach. They could attempt to come clean about all of their past illicit activities, bring their country into compliance with the provisions of the NPT, and, within the framework of international law, work on building a nuclear bomb by *legal* means.

Iran's membership in the NPT gives it the right "to develop research, production, and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes." The treaty also allows "the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials, and . . . information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy." Thus, Iran can legally build or import any sort of nuclear plant it wants as long as it can plausibly assert that it is doing so for "peaceful" purposes, and as long as it allows the IAEA to track any nuclear material the plant produces.

To take advantage of these provisions, Iran would have to cure its existing violations of the NPT. The first step here would be to provide a comprehensive picture of its nuclear efforts, revealing all sites where secret work has taken place, and identifying its foreign suppliers. The IAEA would then attempt to verify Iran's story, scrutinizing it in conjunction with the data it has gathered independently.

If Tehran truthfully recounted everything it had done, the IAEA would have no grounds to refuse the country a clean bill of nuclear health. Freed to continue in the open, Iran could try to import or build all the nuclear equipment it needs for its "civilian" program and to operate existing facilities that have fallen under suspicion—all subject to IAEA inspections.

For example, in its centrifuges at Natanz, Iran would be able to increase the fissile content of uranium to approximately 3.5 percent, which is the level of enrichment needed to fuel the 1,000-megawatt light-water power reactor that Russia is building at Bushehr. Having uranium enriched to this level, however, would bring Iran within months of being able to enrich it further to weapon-grade. Iran could also complete its heavy-water plant and build its planned 40-megawatt reactor at Arak, declaring that these are intended for medical and industrial research. The "hot cells" at the Arak reactor, where weapon-usable plutonium might be extracted from the reactor's spent fuel rods, could be justified as necessary for the production of various medically and industrially useful radioisotopes.

WHICH OF the three paths is Iran likely to take? Continuing to seek a bomb by means of out-and-out deception is likely to prove a difficult course. Iranian officials have attempted to explain how particles of low- and high-enriched uranium came to be found by international inspectors. The Iranians claim that they themselves did not engage in forbidden uranium enrichment; the suspicious particles, they say, were on used equipment that had been imported from abroad. The IAEA is now

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studying this explanation, which might well be proved false.

The IAEA will also soon have the opportunity to inspect the dismantled equipment that Iran has used to extract plutonium. This investigation could likewise prove that Iran did more nuclear work than it has admitted. If Iran gets caught in further lies, the IAEA's governing board may take harsher action than it did in November. It could refer Iran to the UN Security Council, where sanctions might result. Russia could be forced to stop work on the $800-million Bushehr reactor. The European Union might cut back or even end its trade relations with Iran. The United States might threaten the use of force. In short, deception might bear a stiff cost. Iran might still seek to obtain a bomb by this route—and might even be successful—but the risks incurred would be high.

ALTERNATIVELY, IF Iran were to embrace the Libyan path of open renunciation (assuming that Muammar Qaddafi is not engaged in a deception of his own), it would run up against serious liabilities of another kind. To convince the world it was serious, Iran would have to give up all its plants capable of making nuclear-weapon material. This would mean writing off a large investment.

First, it would need to demolish its flagship uranium-enrichment plant at Natanz, together with the approximately 1,000 high-speed gas centrifuges it contains. Iran would also have to scrap all of the specialized machinery needed to manufacture and assemble the centrifuges, plus a new plant being built at Isfahan to produce the gaseous form of uranium processed by the centrifuges. Finally, Iran would have to junk the imported lasers it has used to enrich small quantities of uranium, and then it could shutter its uranium mines; they would be superfluous.

Iran would also have to dispense with its plutonium-production facilities. The heavy-water plant at Arak would have to be abandoned, along with plans to build a 40-megawatt reactor at the same location. Iran would also have to forswear building any facilities that could extract plutonium from spent reactor fuel, including the fuel coming out of the reactor at Bushehr. It would have to agree that all of the fuel at Bushehr would be returned to Russia after use.

The financial loss would be heavy; but that might be the least of it. The power of the present regime in Tehran rests in no small measure on its ability to kindle national pride. Defiance of the international community has been a key means to that end. So has the acquisition of military power. Renouncing a chance to get the bomb would diminish the regime in the eyes of its most fervent followers, and could even hasten its demise. Thus, such a step hardly seems likely, especially now when the world is far from ready to force Iran's hand.

WHICH BRINGS us once again to the third option. Running its program in full compliance with the NPT might well enable Iran to have things both ways. True, intrusive inspections would remain in place, but that major disadvantage would be offset by even more valuable advantages. Not only would the Iranians get to retain their existing nuclear infrastructure, they would be able to augment it.

Iran would be perfectly free to manufacture and assemble centrifuges at Natanz, free to complete and operate the uranium conversion plant at Isfahan, and free to go forward with the planned heavy water plant and reactor at Arak. The centrifuges at Natanz would give Iran enough enriched uranium to fuel a bomb within a year or so of commencing operation.

Iran would also be free to complete the Russian-supplied reactor at Bushehr. Despite what Iran may say, it does not need this facility to produce electricity. Iran is extremely rich in fossil fuels. It currently "flares"—i.e., wastes—natural gas in quantities equal to the output of four Bushehr reactors. At a cost of $800 million, Iran will be paying far more per kilowatt for electricity from Bushehr than it does for electricity generated by its own copious supply of oil. Worse, Bushehr will be fueled by a foreign supplier, fostering energy dependence rather than independence.

But, of course, Iran does not really want the Bushehr reactor to produce electricity. Its real purpose is to serve as a screen behind which to obtain technology. Such deals are common in the nuclear business. The buyer of an expensive item (like a reactor) enjoys tremendous financial leverage, enough to exact "sweeteners" as part of the exchange. These tend to take the form of sensitive equipment that would not be sold on its own because of its bomb-making potential. Mutual interests are thus served. In the case of Iran and Russia, the former gets some of the technology it wants along with a measure of Russian political support in the IAEA and UN; the latter gets an infusion of cash into its starved nuclear sector. Thus the Bushehr reactor, in the words of one American diplomat, is a "giant hook in Russia's jaw."

Under the eyes of IAEA inspectors, it would ad-

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mittedly be difficult for Iran to use this facility or its byproducts to produce nuclear weapons. But Iran would still gain access to advanced equipment, and its scientists would be acquiring ever more experience working with nuclear material.

Taken together, the things Iran could do legally under the NPT amount to a "breakout" capability. At a convenient moment, Iran could renounce the NPT, eject IAEA inspectors, and use the technology it has acquired to build the bomb as swiftly as possible. This would be perfectly legal. The treaty allows any member to drop out on three months' notice.

What the United States and the world would do in those circumstances remains unclear. But Iran is undoubtedly aware of an important precedent—this time not from neighboring Iraq but from faraway East Asia. In 1985, North Korea promised to renounce its nuclear ambitions and adhere to the NPT. In late 2002, North Korea renounced the treaty, ejected IAEA inspectors, and asserted its right to build the bomb. Estimates now credit Pyongyang with at least two and perhaps eight nuclear warheads. Thus far, the response of America and the rest of the world has been to observe, to protest, and to get used to the fact that yet another menacing country has acquired nuclear weapons.

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Still Losing the Race?

John H. McWhorter

When I got my doctorate in linguistics from Stanford University in 1993, the furthest thing imaginable to me was that, ten years later, I would be in the midst of a second career as a pundit on race issues, let alone find myself classed as a black conservative. True, in college and graduate school, I had felt frustrated and dismayed whenever a successful black of my acquaintance would go out of his way to adopt the pose of a victim of American "racism." But to me this sort of angry display was of merely passing interest. My own life was built around writing academic papers, making the rounds of linguistics conferences, and playing piano and performing on stage as a hobby. In 1995 I took my place as a professor of linguistics at Berkeley with little expectation that life would change much thereafter.

Then came Proposition 209, the 1996 referendum banning racial preferences in the state of California. At an elite school like Berkeley, the immediate effect of this ban was to reduce the number of blacks admitted, thereby sparking a furious reaction and much talk of an ominous drift toward the "resegregation" of American society. It was not as if anybody denied that the typical black applicant to Berkeley suffered from lower grades and test scores than the typical white applicant; but the problem, we were instructed, lay in the grim facts of black disadvantage in America, and to forbid any consideration of those circumstances in admissions procedures amounted to sheer bigotry.

In my own experience, as well as in what I saw of the students I taught, the truth was otherwise: the problem, plainly, was not one of socioeconomic status—most of my black students were in fact middle-class—but of culture, and lowered standards were likely to preserve and even intensify that problem, not to ameliorate it. I was moved to argue as much in an essay for a website; upon reading what I had to say, an agent suggested I expand it into a book. For a while I hesitated, uncertain that anyone would care what some linguist thought about race. But in the end, impressed by how rarely most black professors who entered into public discourse permitted themselves to stray from ritualized tribal plaints, I decided I was responsible for at least getting my views into print. And so in 2000 I published *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America*,* a book contending, in brief, that "black America is currently caught in certain ideological holding patterns"—chief among them being the ideology of permanent victimhood—and that these today are "much more serious barriers to black well-being than is white racism."

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* Free Press. *Losing the Race* was reviewed in COMMENTARY by Damon Linker, October 2000.

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Neither my publisher nor I expected much to happen. But, to our joint surprise, *Losing the Race* became a national bestseller. Even now, more than three years after publication, it continues to sell well; it has also become assigned reading in classrooms across the country, and it has kept me busy with speaking engagements and appearances on television and radio talk shows. Among the over 3,000 e-mails and letters I have received about *Losing the Race*, only a trickle have been written in malice. From blacks around the country I have heard, rather, that it touched them deeply, that they wish me well, and that they hope I will continue to speak out. I have been approached regularly in the street by blacks wanting to tell me how much they appreciate my message even if they do not agree with me on every point.

From all this, it has become clear to me that there is a large number of blacks in America, maybe even a silent majority, ready for a message other than the race-baiting and crafted pessimism so often served up as advanced black thought

ONE WOULD never have guessed any of this, however, from most of the reviews of *Losing the Race* that appeared in the mainstream press at the time of publication or from much of the public discussion of its ideas in the years since then. The book received its roughest treatment at the hands of black journalists and professors and their white sympathizers. The black columnist Jack E. White, in *Time*, was first out of the gate—helping, ironically, to bring the book to national attention. Thereafter came a string of contemptuous dismissals in the major newspapers and Sunday book-review supplements, and "profiles" of the author that often rendered me as a sinister blowhard.

Technically, of course, I have to consider the possibility that the negative assessment of *Losing the Race* was the correct one, and that the man on the street is wrong about it and, by extension, about America. My professional work, after all, has not been in political science, sociology, or African-American studies. So, over the intervening years, I have tried to keep up with the work of the so-called authorities. This is itself no small task: almost every year witnesses a new primer on black victimhood and on the continuing tragedy of the black experience in America, and since 2000 I myself have been added to the list of injuries inflicted on my community.

Three recent and notable contributions to the genre are *Yet A Stranger: Why Black Americans Still Don't Feel at Home* by the columnist Deborah Mathis[1]; *The Great Wells of Democracy* by Manning Marable, chairman of African-American studies at Columbia[2]; and *Another Day at the Front* by the essayist Ishmael Reed.[3] Each of these writers has strong views. Mathis, who appears regularly on Juan Williams's radio show, *America's Black Forum*, is convinced that the society in which she lives is as atavistically bigoted as her grandparents' America. Marable, the author of several books on the theme that black Americans remain engaged in a "struggle" against "white supremacy," here designates me a "race traitor" who "desperately wants to distance himself from his oppressed brothers and sisters." Reed, a well-known figure in the San Francisco Bay area, has tracked my writings so closely that he can dredge up statements I myself have to labor to recall, denouncing me as an intellectual lightweight and a "rent-a-black."

Have these critics grasped a truth that has eluded me? A particular challenge posed by all three books—and others like them—is that they require one to enter into a kind of alternate black universe, the same universe whose unreality prompted me to write *Losing the Race* in the first place. Its outlines have changed little in twenty years, and go roughly as follows.

First, racism continues to suffuse American life at every level. True, overt discrimination has been outlawed; but a network of legal protections has not affected what Mathis terms "passive racism" and Marable "laissez-faire racism." This system of tacit discrimination, as pernicious in its effects as the poll tax, continues to sustain "the pervasive power of white privilege" (Marable) and condemns all but a lucky few to failure. In Deborah Mathis's doleful words, "Escape is possible, but it usually requires exceptional fortitude, a stroke of good luck, uncommon patience, and soul-sapping perseverance."

Second, just over the horizon looms the return of Bull Connor and his fire hoses. Mathis worries that "at any moment the little dance of tolerance may be abandoned and there you'd have it: a full frontal assault of prejudice, fear, anger, and deadly assumptions." She already envisions a state, "overrun by archconservatives," cutting off welfare benefits entirely.

It follows, third, that nothing short of a profound and thoroughgoing psychological revolution among whites can prevent black America from remaining forever mired in its predicament. How to help bring about this psychological revolution? Marable predictably espouses reparations. Mathis hopes more vaguely for a collective experience of white remorse.

[1] Warner, 272 pp., $13.95 (paper).

[2] BasicCivitas, 384 pp., $18.50 (paper).

[3] Basic, 256 pp., $24.00.

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I do not mean to be unfair. Along the way to their separate iterations of the same thesis, our three authors do raise serious or at least semi-serious issues. All three, for instance, dwell on the overrepresentation of black men in the prison population—a situation that does indeed qualify as a tragedy, if not in the simplistic way they imagine. Nor is there anything illegitimate about questioning the lengthy sentences being served by some of these men for possession of drugs or for acting as low-level footmen in the drug trade, or about expressing concern for the women and children they leave behind, the latter gravely at risk of repeating the mistakes of their fathers.

Devoting a chapter to the violent encounters he had with police in the 1960's and 1970's, and nasty ones thereafter, Ishmael Reed echoes a common complaint of even well-heeled black people across the country. Here, too, no one would dispute that excesses must be curbed, or that police forces must work with local communities to get rid of bad apples, even as sensible "profiling" remains necessary in order to protect people, including black people, from assault and murder. On pragmatic grounds alone, it is in everybody's interest that a generation of blacks be raised without easy or automatic recourse to the iconography of cops as the black man's enemy.

But to speak pragmatically is already to take us far from the apocalyptic vision of race relations that is the ground note of each of these books. Thus, Reed authoritatively informs us that, "for African-Americans, every day is a day at the front." In Mathis's eyes, incredibly, "Life for the multitude of black Americans is not much different from the way it was in 1944 when Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal wrote his groundbreaking book, *An American Dilemma*." And so forth. Responding to the contention of the black economist Lester O'Shea that there *is* no single black experience, Mathis can only throw up her hands: "What can we say but, Father, forgive him."

Well, forgive me: this collective portrait of degradation bears so little resemblance to my own experience, or the experience of my friends and acquaintances, that I can only throw up *my* hands. Certainly, my friends and I can cite unpleasant and possibly racially tinged incidents here and there in the course of our lifetimes. But for none of us are these the anecdotes we come home with on a weekly, monthly, or even annual basis. Not once to date have I had a nasty, intrusive run-in with the police, despite being no stranger to nightlife in cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Oakland, and despite having driven a beat-up car in tony white neighborhoods on a regular basis when, as a graduate student, I earned extra money playing piano at parties.

I have been condescendingly assured by some connoisseurs of victimhood that I am an exception—"not the type the cops look for"—and that I have a "straight" appearance. But as for appearance, I am hardly given to the bowtie look, and in any case the going wisdom is that police harassment is as likely to befall the black lawyer in a Lexus as a teenaged boy in the 'hood. Nor do my black male friends who are darker-complected than I, burlier in build, or less middle-class in speech and demeanor have tales to tell of racist abuse by the pigs.

More to the point is that, for writers ostensibly committed to telling the truth about the state of black America, these three display saliently little mastery of easily ascertainable facts, not to mention the literature on their topic. Marable, for instance, simply regurgitates the story about an epidemic of black church burnings in the South in the mid-1990's—an epidemic, it has been decisively and repeatedly shown, that never happened. He decries the reduction in minority admissions at Berkeley after Proposition 209, ignoring the fact not only that minority admissions *rose* at most of the other University of California campuses, but that they have since risen annually at both Berkeley and UCLA, the two elite institutions. He repeats the myth (propagated by Jonathan Kozol) that inner-city schools are undone by insufficient funding, when a vast body of research has demonstrated that such discrepancies have been exaggerated or are nonexistent, and that untold numbers of schools excel on shoestring budgets. He then sees this alleged disparity as justifying lowered admissions standards to college for all black students, ignoring the mountain of studies and books (including mine) showing that even middle-class black students at fine schools lag behind in performance.

Ishmael Reed is so caught up in his battle at "the front" that he often simply fabricates.[4] "The only black opinion-makers with any visibility are those who serve as mind doubles for their neoconservative or right-wing bosses," he asserts, requiring us to classify as obscurities writers like Bob Herbert and Brent Staples of the *New York Times* and, for that matter, Marable and Reed himself. As for Mathis,

[4] Reed's book is a self-obsessed, rambling mess, and its publisher appears not even to have subjected the pages to proofreading. Thus, Reed shares with us his views on the Palestinian "intafada," on people getting what is "their's," and on such inventively spelled figures as Betty Freidan, Sir Thomas Moore, Jonas Savibimbi, Jane Austin, D'Nesh D'souza, and someone rather zealously flagged as John McWorther.

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she, like Marable, subscribes to the canard that, historically, black communities thrived until white flight and the traitorous departure of the black middle class, developments that then left the less fortunate to sink into rampant criminality, unemployment, drug abuse, and illegitimacy—as if these problems were the inevitable and universal results of poverty. Although she does not approve of what open-ended welfare did to black communities, she considers the welfare-reform act of 1996 to have been a disaster, despite evidence to the contrary so persuasive that most of those initially opposed to the reform have since changed their minds.

Not only do the three authors maintain a studious blindness to progress, they evince little interest in solutions to the miasma they so urgently depict. Or, rather, Reed shows no interest at all. Marable and Mathis, who devote 95 percent of their texts to declaiming and denouncing, relegate their solutions to the parenthetical, the hazily presented, and the unlikely.

Finally, given the central role played by faith and hope in black advancement, it is astonishing how little confidence these authors repose in the ability of blacks to determine their own destiny. In my own writing, I have celebrated the local, mostly unknown black leaders who have dedicated their lives to helping their people help themselves. Marable does rhapsodize about the "deep humanistic belief in African Americans as a people" that was characteristic of black leaders of the past; ultimately, however, he deems it less important to instill such a "deep, humanistic belief" in contemporary blacks than to inform them of the hopelessness of their condition (short of the revolution that he has little faith will occur). In Mathis's case, although one of her prescriptions to American blacks is to persevere and move on, her whole book preaches the futility of the effort.

WHAT EXPLAINS the discrepancy between contemporary black experience and the portrait drawn by the likes of Marable, Mathis, and Reed? Here I can only speculate. As it happens, all three are old enough actually to have known a segregated America. Deborah Mathis, for example, tells us how she and her family were once barred from a hotel, and remembers white parents forbidding their children from playing with her when her family moved to a white neighborhood. Having been born in an earlier era, the three seem stuck in the realities of their childhood and early adolescence. But if this explains something, it hardly excuses: they, of all people, living through what they lived through, should know better than to depict modern America as having advanced barely a step beyond the past.

Something else may bear mentioning in this connection: neither Marable, Mathis, nor Reed is dark-skinned. Nor are similarly-minded blacks of their age, like Julianne Malveaux, Randall Robinson, and Jack E. White. At my speaking engagements, I have frequently noticed that my most vociferous critics tend to be lighter-skinned blacks in their fifties. There was a time when such light-skinned blacks looked down on dark-skinned blacks; but that was before the black-is-beautiful movement of the late 60's. One cannot help wondering whether part of the animus in the writings of Marable, Mathis, and Reed stems from a desire to show how "black" they really are.

Be that as it may, Reed's *Another Day at the Front* offers a different sort of clue. Its thesis is that racism persists because white Americans have a vested interest in maintaining the fiction of white superiority and, especially, black inferiority. Behind what Reed sees as an "industry" of white writers engaged in describing "black pathologies" is, he asserts, a dirty little secret—namely, that people of all races often display the same pathologies, and to the same degree. If black reading scores are disproportionately low, reading scores are no less abysmal among American students as a whole. If black graduation rates are low, Hispanic women drop out of school at even more alarming rates. If there is an AIDS epidemic in black communities, the epidemic is also nationwide. In short, Americans need a scapegoat for their own manifold ills, and blacks have been designated to fill the role.

The worst thing about this thesis is not that it is ignorant, which it is, but that taking Reed at his word requires a heartless dismissal of, precisely, black suffering. There may be a rhetorical thrill to be had in pointing out that even if most killers of blacks today are themselves black, whites killed a much larger number of blacks over the course of the 20th century. But does Reed truly think that this nimble factoid furnishes a useful higher wisdom to a Chicago community leader helplessly watching black teens gunning each other down? Would he stand beside this man at the real front, at perhaps the third funeral for a teenager he has attended in a month, reminding him how the massacre at Columbine showed that violence is not restricted to young blacks?

The only way to make sense out of such lapses in common empathy is to understand that the "insights" of writers like Marable, Mathis, and Reed have no truly constructive intent. For all their passion, they are driven by motives less analytical than recreational. Under the guise of seeking to better

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the lives of black people, theirs is a simple, self-indulgent quest for indignation now, indignation forever. In an only slightly more sophisticated way, they are like the legions of up-and-coming blacks under forty-five who can be seen mouthing the cop-hating lyrics of hip-hop music as they drive to their corporate offices in their new Mercedes sedans.

There is, to be sure, nothing inherently "black" about this. It is natural for human beings to seek the balm of superior feeling. Gossip is a relatively harmless manifestation of the syndrome; reflexive alienation is more pernicious. The latter has been a crutch especially available to blacks, with an audience of whites eager for absolution and blacks no less eager to be comforted by assurances that they have been deprived of "understanding" and are owed a "debt."

Nor do I mean to suggest that race writers like Marable, Mathis, and Reed are "hustlers," out for gain. Rather, they exemplify what can happen when an unhealed spiritual wound meets an opportunity to vent one's outrage. It has always bemused me that Marable and Reed call me "self-hating," since that is exactly the quality I notice in their writings. Theirs is a historically contingent condition, one that accounts, I believe, for the lack of fit between their rhetoric and present reality.

Thankfully, most black Americans today are not buying it. I see evidence of this even in the rarefied realm of the university, the arena of American life most conducive to gestural politics and most resistant to reality. Just as *Losing the Race* met a warmer reception among the black public than among the experts, there are signs that younger blacks, including on campus, are moving toward a more constructive politics.

One such sign is to be found in the statistics of voter registration. Thus, a recent poll by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies shows that, whereas only about a quarter of all blacks in 2002 registered as independents, the figure rose to a third among blacks between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. According to the same survey, the number identifying themselves as Democrats dropped from 74 percent in 2000 to 63 percent in 2002. Al Sharpton himself seems barely able to take seriously his run for the presidency, and no other blacks of his race-baiting type have risen to national prominence. Cynthia McKinney of Georgia and Earl Hilliard of Alabama, two black members of Congress who tarred their opponents as insufficiently "black," were voted out by blacks ready for a new message. The NAACP, its national leadership frozen in a reflexive battle pose, plays an increasingly marginal role in black affairs.

Even the overwhelming support that blacks gave to Al Gore in the last presidential election masks a growing conservative strain. A *Washington Post* exit poll of black voters, for example, showed a whopping 86 percent opposed to racial preferences. In a recent study titled *Black Pride and Black Prejudice*, the political scientists Paul Sniderman and Thomas Piazza report an even more astonishing 90 percent of blacks rejecting the idea of admitting a less qualified black student over a more qualified white one, even if the disparity in test scores is slight.

It is harder but truer to believe that the world changes slowly than to believe that the world does not change at all. Last November, at the annual awards ceremony of the National Urban League in New York, the predominantly black audience sang dutifully along with the black anthem, "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," but joined lustily in "God Bless America." Seated at my table was a woman (once again, light-skinned and in her fifties) who, a few years before, had condemned me as a racist and a self-hater for a talk I gave at a Manhattan community college. This time she was quite cordial; it was as if, having seen that I am not going away, she has opened herself to the possibility that I and my kind may not be the Antichrist after all.

No doubt, someone like Manning Marable, so disgusted with America that he excoriates the NAACP for giving an award to Condoleezza Rice, would see the National Urban League evening as a gathering of sellouts to the evil white establishment. But to pretend that successful, contented black people making their way in an imperfect but promising nation are moral perverts, with nothing to teach their less fortunate brothers, flies so directly in the face of logic, compassion, and experience as to qualify as a kind of mental onanism. To insist that successful blacks, no matter how numerous they become, qualify only as a few lucky souls squeaking through a squeezed-shut door is a grievous insult to the memory of the thousands of civil-rights leaders and footworkers who gave their all to making possible the lives that Marable, Mathis, Reed—and I—enjoy today.

The pity is that such writers, and those who echo them in the mass media and popular culture, will inevitably entice young blacks who remain susceptible to the cheap thrills of staged aggrievement. We must bear this in mind in criticizing them—even as, moving ever more blissfully beyond the America of their dire imaginings, we murmur, charitably, "Father, forgive them."

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The UN and the Jews

Anne Bayefsky

It was not an event that any of the big newspapers saw fit to cover, but this past December, a draft United Nations resolution condemning anti-Semitism was quietly withdrawn by Ireland, its sponsor in the General Assembly. In a complicated exchange, Irish Foreign Minister Brian Cowen had promised the measure to his Israeli counterpart Silvan Shalom, but in the end Cowen refused to carry out his side of the bargain, pointing to a lack of consensus on the issue. (Several Arab and Muslim states had objections.) Thus went by the boards what would have been the first-ever General Assembly resolution dealing directly with the problem of anti-Semitism.

And thus, too, has gone much else at the UN in the name of human rights. Indeed, for veteran observers of the goings-on at Turtle Bay, the outcome of the latest session was just one more episode in a long and ugly history. Even when judged against the hypocrisy with which the UN has frequently treated its own founding principles—principles of tolerance, human dignity, and national self-determination—the international body's abiding hostility to the just claims of Israel and the Jewish people remains a special, and especially egregious, case.

The events of World War II and the Holocaust weighed heavily on the founders of the United Nations. The starting point of the new organization's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, was the determination to overcome the "disregard and contempt for human rights" that had "resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind." Nazism had tried to eradicate one people, the Jews. The UN's core documents generalized from that case, declaring that global progress depended on respect for fundamental freedoms without distinction of race, sex, language, or religion. Human rights were to be the new currency of international politics.

But even as some transgressions of these principles received juridical attention in the UN's early years—theft of cultural property, gross deficiencies in education and labor standards, and the like—no mention was made of anti-Semitism. Not until 1959, when some 2,000 anti-Jewish incidents, ranging from serious property damage to threats of bodily harm, were reported in almost 40 countries (a large number of them in West Germany), did the UN's Commission on Human Rights pass a resolution titled "Manifestations of Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Racial Prejudice and Religious Intolerance of a Similar Nature." By the time the resolution reached the floor of the General Assembly, however, the term "anti-Semitism" had been dropped.

Drafters of the UN's key declarations on human rights soon became masters at evading the issue. When, in 1964-65, the American delegation (with

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the assistance of Brazil) tried to include a reference to anti-Semitism in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the effort failed, thanks to the Soviet Union, its satellites, and its Arab allies, who among other things insisted that anti-Semitism was a question not of race but of religion. When the UN finally got around to adopting its first declaration on religious intolerance in 1981, anti-Semitism was again excluded. By 2003, the lead sponsor of the perennial resolution on religious tolerance, Ireland, insisted with a straight face that anti-Semitism should be omitted because it was more properly considered under the rubric of race.

Against this unrelievedly dark record of omission, a few glimmers of progress have appeared over the past decade. After tumultuous multi-week negotiations in 1994, the U.S. persuaded the UN Commission on Human Rights to adopt its first resolution including the word "anti-Semitism" in over 30 years—and only the second in its history. Even so, a full third of the commission's members refused to support it, and eight years later, with the U.S. temporarily voted off the commission, it returned to form, withdrawing its short-lived concern and excising anti-Semitism from the racism resolution. Last year, after drawn-out negotiations, the General Assembly did manage to permit references to anti-Semitism in two resolutions on racism, one of them without effect or follow-up and the second in the full knowledge that other elements in the resolution would force the United States and Israel to vote against it.

By the summer of 2001, at the now notorious UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, the notion that Jews were the target of any special animus, now or in the past, was being treated with simple contempt. References to anti-Semitism were removed from almost all parts of the final declaration. Not only was there no mention of the Holocaust in the conference's demand that those who incite racial hatred should be brought to justice, but absent as well was any mention of the need to study the Nazi war against the Jews. The only references to the Holocaust and anti-Semitism appeared as part of a "Middle East package" in which Palestinians were declared to be victims of *Israeli* racism.

And what of today, as we experience the world's most virulent outbreak of anti-Semitic deeds and speech in over a half-century? Concern over this phenomenon did make an appearance, however fleetingly, in two reports issued in 2003 by the UN special investigator on racism, Doudou Diéne. In one of them, his comment consisted of a short, vague reference to the controversy surrounding the recent broadcast on Egyptian television of a series based on the infamous czarist forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Unnamed "authorities of the countries concerned," Diéne wrote, were in the process of sending him further information on this "allegation" of anti-Semitism.

In a second report published last year, this one addressed to the General Assembly itself, Diéne offered a seemingly new approach, promising to turn his attention to the "clear resurgence of anti-Semitism." But his only action to date has been to take note of the obvious fact that attacks on Jews are "on the rise in Europe, Central Asia, and North America." Entirely absent from his statements has been any mention of the boiling cauldron of *Middle Eastern* anti-Semitism—a silence all the more remarkable in light of the multiple examples of "Islamophobia" that he has documented with alarm. In this connection, it is worth noting that, though Diéne is now required to produce annual reports "on discrimination against Muslims and Arab peoples in various parts of the world," no report dedicated to the problem of anti-Semitism has ever been produced by any organ of the UN.

This indifference to anti-Semitism has been mirrored by the UN's growing refusal over the decades to support the principle of self-determination for the Jewish people—that is, Zionism. The irony, of course, is that the UN General Assembly was very much present at the creation of the state of Israel, having endorsed the postwar partition plan for British-ruled Palestine. But much has changed since 1948.

In general, and in the abstract, the UN has remained committed to the ideal of self-governing nation-states. As one characteristic declaration of the General Assembly puts it, "All peoples have a right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development." Indeed, over the years, the UN has developed and extended the principles of self-determination, which are now taken to entail not just the basic right of political independence but guarantees of non-interference by other nations, a realm of domestic jurisdiction and national sovereignty, and the preservation of historical, cultural, and religious particularities.

Where the UN has fallen markedly short is in the application of these principles, and in no case more strikingly than that of Israel. The key factor

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has been the changing composition of the international body. From the late 1940's to the mid-60's, the original membership more than doubled. Of the 67 new states joining in this period, 80 percent attached themselves to the Group of 77—the UN's third-world caucus, made up of many former European colonies—and some 40 percent had Muslim majorities. By 1977, the five members of the Arab League who helped to found the UN had been joined by all sixteen others.

To this radicalized and often Soviet-influenced contingent, self-determination was invoked in UN circles not as a general principle but as a tool to wield against the West, especially the U.S. and its increasingly stalwart ally, Israel. Self-determination was a right of the oppressed, to be exerted against oppressors. In the prosecution of this cause, the weight assigned to historical claims was itself selective and discriminatory: those who rejected the UN's 1947 partition plan for Palestine were labeled the oppressed, while Jewish victims, from Palestine to Europe, were characterized as the oppressors.

By this means has the UN negotiated the passage from omission to commission. Not only has it consistently failed to appreciate or even to acknowledge the state of Israel's preservation of Jewish independence and identity, it has become the loudest and most determined foe of the Zionist project.

In 1975 the UN General Assembly passed its notorious resolution explicitly equating Zionism with racism. Ever since then, and notwithstanding the formal repeal of the resolution in 1991, the repellent imagery of Israelis as racists has been a staple of UN rhetoric. Today, diplomats from Arab and Muslim states—states that effectively rendered themselves *Judenrein* in the late 1940's—refer to Israel's new security fence against terrorism as an "apartheid wall." Palestinian towns and villages are called "Bantustans." And the Palestinian Marwan Barghouti, on trial in Israel for acts of terrorism, is labeled another Nelson Mandela.

To judge by the UN's official pronouncements, the Jewish state is the world's archetypal human-rights villain. Over the past 40 years, almost 30 percent of the resolutions passed by the UN Commission on Human Rights to condemn specific states have been directed at Israel, which also has the distinction of being the only state to which the commission has devoted an entire item on its agenda.

As for the General Assembly, of the ten emergency special sessions it has convened in its history, six have focused on the purported misdeeds of Israel, from the Suez campaign of 1956 to the current dispute over the security fence. The abuse of this process has gone so far that the tenth session, originally convened in 1997, has become a permanent, open-ended forum; it has now been "reconvened" twelve times, most recently this past December.

Israel has been singled out in other ways as well. In the UN bureaucracy, it is the only country with its own standing inter-state monitor: the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. Established as long ago as 1968, this body has issued annual reports ever since. Another committee, on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, was established in 1975, on the same day the General Assembly passed the Zionism-is-racism resolution. Still going strong almost three decades later, with 24 members and 25 observers, it too summarizes its findings every year while at the same time sponsoring a full program of meetings, conferences, and publications. In 2003 alone, the UN bureaucracy generated 22 reports and formal notes on "conditions of Palestinian and other Arab citizens living under Israeli occupation."

The UN's response to an Israeli military incursion into the West Bank town of Jenin in April 2002 typifies the organization's treatment of the Jewish state. At the time, even a report by Yasir Arafat's Fatah movement recognized Jenin as "the suicider's capital," a place where organizations like Hamas and Islamic Jihad had sought shelter, among civilians, for their ongoing murderous operations. But the UN saved its venom for Israel's armed response to the violence directed against its citizens. Terje Roed-Larsen, the organization's special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, described the scene after Israel's strike—a strike expressly designed to limit civilian casualties—as "horrific beyond belief." Peter Hansen, commissioner general of the UN Relief and Works Agency, called it "a human catastrophe that had few parallels in recent history." A UN press release was headlined, "End the horror in the camps." Only much later, in mid-summer, did the UN Secretary General release a report on Jenin noting that the Palestinian death toll from this "massacre" was 52, approximately 35 of whom were armed combatants.

ISRAEL'S POLICIES are, of course, fair game for legitimate criticism. But the UN's outrage is grossly selective, especially when one considers the record of any number of other member nations. In 2003, the General Assembly passed eighteen resolutions that singled out Israel for criticism; human-

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rights situations in the rest of the world drew only four country-specific resolutions. Nor, despite serious and well-documented charges of abuse reported to the UN over the years from, among others, the organization's own special rapporteurs, has any resolution of the UN Commission on Human Rights ever been directed at China, Syria, Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Pakistan, Malaysia, Mali, or Zimbabwe.

Consider the case of Sudan. This past year, members of the UN Commission on Human Rights had before them the report of their own special rapporteur on torture, which described the articles of the Sudanese penal code mandating "cross amputation"—the amputation of the right hand and the left foot—for armed robbery and, for other offenses, "death by hanging crucifixion." The report also took note of various cases in which Sudanese women had been stoned to death for adultery after trials conducted in a language they did not understand and in which they were denied legal representation.

The response to these gruesome findings? On behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Pakistan vehemently objected to a draft resolution condemning this sort of "cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment," declaring such views "an offense to all Muslim countries." The resolution went down to defeat; for good measure, the commission terminated the ten-year-old position of rapporteur on human rights for the long-suffering people of Sudan.

The justifications that are typically given for turning a blind eye to human-rights violations in 95 percent of UN states are predictable enough. In 2003, teaming up to defeat a resolution condemning Russian behavior in Chechnya, Syria and China called it "interference in the internal affairs of that country." India said that "every state had the right to protect its citizens from terrorism." When it came to reproving Zimbabwe, South Africa objected to "naming and shaming," while Libya, complaining that the resolution was "an attempt to make the commission a forum to settle differences between countries," declared its preference for "the language of cooperation and dialogue."

How is it, one might wonder, that such reservations never give the UN a moment's pause when it comes to the organization's relentlessly one-sided prosecution of Israel—a democratic state with an independent judiciary that, unlike all these others, can point to a long and distinguished record of respect for human rights? The demonization of Israel would seem to be about something else entirely.

What that something is has become too clear to deny: over the past several decades, the UN has fashioned itself into perhaps the foremost global platform *for* anti-Semitism.

The leading agent of this process, needless to say, has been the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Israel's supposed "partner in peace," in close cooperation with Arab and Muslim members of the UN. In presentations to the UN Commission on Human Rights, Palestinian delegates have repeatedly devised new variations on the medieval blood libel, accusing the Israelis of such things as needing to kill Arabs for the proper observance of Yom Kippur and of injecting Palestinian children with HIV-positive blood.

By Palestinians and others, Israelis are now routinely condemned with Nazi terminology—current resolutions speak of the "Judaization" of Jerusalem—or are themselves likened to Nazis. As the Algerian representative recently observed, in an especially memorable outburst:

> Kristallnacht repeats itself daily. . . . Israeli soldiers are the true disciples of Goebbels and of Himmler, who strip Palestinian prisoners and inscribe numbers on their bodies. . . . Must we wait in silence until new death camps are built. . . . The Israeli war machine has been trying for five decades to arrive at a final solution.

The nadir of the UN's record in these matters was the conference on racism and xenophobia held under its auspices in Durban in 2001. It would have been bad enough if (as we have already seen) the event had simply refused to acknowledge the growing problem of anti-Semitism; but it went much farther, turning into a festival of hatred against the Jews.

Though the Durban conference concluded with a formal meeting of government representatives, its first half consisted of an NGO forum—a meeting, that is, of the various nongovernmental organizations purportedly devoted to combating racism. NGO's play a key role in the UN system, with some of them receiving formal status, but here Jews have once again been singled out for discriminatory treatment. Over the years, attempts have been made to impede groups like Hadassah, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists from obtaining official accreditation. Durban gave some idea why.

At the conference's NGO forum, the Arab Lawyer's Union freely distributed books containing cartoons of swastika-festooned Israelis and fanged, hooked-nosed Jews, blood dripping from their hands. Another best-selling title was *The Pro-*

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tocols of the Elders of Zion. Hundreds of flyers were distributed with a picture of Hitler and the words, "What if I had won? The good thing—there would be no Israel." Appeals to the conference's secretary-general, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, to demand the removal of this anti-Semitic literature went unheeded.

The NGO forum at Durban did sponsor a single event on anti-Semitism, but it was disrupted by an angry mob of protesters, shouting, "You are killers! You are killers!" A news conference the following day, called by a broad range of national and international Jewish organizations, was similarly interrupted, this time for the benefit of the TV cameras, and was finally called off.

As the NGO forum drew to a close, the Jewish caucus, like all the other caucuses, submitted provisions for the conference's final document. The group's contribution stated that anti-Semitism could take many forms, including the equation of Zionism with racism, the attempt to de-legitimize the self-determination of the Jewish people, and the targeting of Jews throughout the world for violence because of their support of Israel. When the time finally came for a vote, a representative of the World Council of Churches called for the deletion of this language; the Jewish caucus was alone in voting against the motion. Jewish NGO's from all over the world walked out in protest, even as representatives of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Lawyers Committee on Human Rights stood by in silence. No statement proposed by any other caucus was deleted.

DID THE UN system learn a lesson from this fiasco? To the contrary. Just months after Durban, Vladimir Petrovsky, director-general of the UN office in Geneva, declared the conference "the most extensive and momentous expression of the global resolve to combat the scourge of racism and intolerance in all its forms and at all levels." Commissioner Mary Robinson agreed, telling a subsequent UN human-rights gathering that the Durban conference's International Youth Summit—a part of the NGO forum at which young Jews from all over the world were jeered, heckled, and threatened, before eventually walking out—had been "an inspiring event."

In the two years since Durban, whose outrages were quickly overshadowed by the events of 9/11, anti-Semitism voiced under the auspices of the UN has taken a new and, arguably, even more dangerous turn. In every UN body, Arab and Muslim states have opposed any effort to give meaningful definition to the notion of terrorism, largely because of its obvious implications for the Palestinian "uprising." The UN Counter Terrorism Committee, set up by the Security Council in the wake of 9/11, has yet to identify publicly a single terrorist organization or state sponsor of terrorism.

Worse still, organs of the UN have taken to glorifying terrorist violence against Israeli targets. In 2002, John Dugard, a special rapporteur for the Commission on Human Rights, could barely contain his admiration for the murderous enemies of the Jewish state: "The Palestinian response is equally tough: while suicide bombers have created terror in the Israeli heartland, militarized groups armed with rifles, mortars, and Kassam-2 rockets confront the IDF [Israeli army] with new determination, daring, and success."

In 2003, as Israel suffered successive waves of attack against its civilians, the commission itself put forward a resolution affirming the legitimacy of suicide bombing, declaring that movements against "foreign occupation and for self-determination" were entitled to "all available means, including armed struggle." The only members to vote against the resolution were Australia, Germany, Peru, Canada, and the United States. (France and the United Kingdom abstained.) The American and Canadian delegates protested that the resolution was "contrary to the very concept of human rights" and "deeply repugnant to the commission's core values." It carried by a wide margin.

IT IS no accident that a UN apparatus which, for decades, has ignored anti-Semitism and distorted beyond recognition the idea of Zionism would seek to isolate Israel from the global community. At the UN, Israelis and Jews are, by definition, oppressors, as are the nations and organizations that rally to their cause. The energy with which these hateful views are expressed has ebbed and flowed over time, but there is no reason to think that the underlying reality will change anytime soon.

To appreciate the dimensions of this tragedy one need only recall the lofty promises of the UN Charter, ratified in the hope of securing the "equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small." By this plain and unambiguous standard, anti-Semitism is not some necessary if unfortunate by-product of multilateral progress, as some would suggest. It is an out-and-out malignancy, and it has compromised the integrity of the entire organism. Perhaps it is time to stop holding seminars and conferences on whether the UN glass is half-full or half-empty. The contents of the glass have been poisoned.

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Krystyna's Gift
A Memoir

Lydia Aran

I HAVE no clear or systematic recollection of the dates or the order of events from this chapter of my life some 60 years ago. My memory is fragmentary, and I can summon up only isolated moments and situations, like single beads on an invisible thread of time. Yet some are inexplicably vivid and clear, and I feel a strange certainty about the accuracy of my recall. What I remember best is the emotional tone. Is this not what bearing witness is about?

MY TWIN sister and I were born in 1921, in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, just one year after it was captured by the Poles. Our given names were Meena and Liah; we would much later change them to Monica and Lydia, the names under which we had lived during the Nazi occupation.

Vilnius—or Vilna, to use the name by which Jews knew it—remained part of the Polish state only until 1939, when, following a secret agreement between the USSR and Germany, it became the capital of the Lithuanian republic of the Soviet Union. In its long history, the city had changed hands several times; but its elites and most of its population had always been Polish, and from the 15th century on it was an important center of Polish culture and learning.

Jews were a huge, culturally non-integrated minority. In the 1930's, they made up over 25 percent of Vilna's overall population and more than half of its doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. The city, renowned as a center of Torah study, was home as well to an array of secular Jewish cultural institutions, a system of Hebrew and Yiddish schools, and any number of socialist and Zionist organizations.

We grew up in somewhat unusual circumstances: a middle-class, secular family with no interest in Jewish tradition. My father, who had changed his first name from Solomon to Severin, was one of the few Vilna Jews identifying themselves as "Poles of the Mosaic faith," in the futile hope of becoming integrated into Polish society. Our mother, Liuba, was a certified but non-practicing surgical nurse. The only time I remember being in a Jewish religious setting was on national holidays, when Jewish pupils in the public schools were marched to synagogue for an official service while Christian girls and boys celebrated a special mass in church.

My parents seemed uninterested in their ancestry, though I know that my mother's family came from Dwinsk (Dinaburg) in Latvia, my father's from Slonim in Belorussia. My mother's father had

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been a wealthy merchant, trading in building materials. In my earliest memories he was already retired; although we dutifully visited these grandparents from time to time, there was no warmth or intimacy in our relations. As for my paternal grandfather, he worked for the Jewish community as manager of the Vilna Jewish cemetery. We liked him, but our favorite was Grandmother, a short, round, warm-natured woman and a veritable treasure house of Yiddish folklore and wisdom. After Grandfather's death, she came to stay with us, habitually siding with us girls in confrontations with our stern and puritan parents.

My father managed a plywood and cardboard factory in the tiny settlement of Waka Murowana, which lay in a timber-rich region about 25 miles west of Vilna. Aside from the industrial compound and a bridge over a dam harnessing the waters of the Waka river, the settlement consisted of only one real house. This was the manager's residence, where we lived: a sprawling wooden building on a hill surrounded by an orchard. A smaller structure in the courtyard housed the servants and a store of equipment. We also kept an apartment in town, where during the school year we and our mother often stayed on weekdays. But Waka was our real home.

Though my parents accused tradition-minded Jews of remaining voluntarily segregated in 20th-century Vilna, their own company consisted almost exclusively of Jews, members like themselves of the small Polish-Jewish intelligentsia who were only partly assimilated to Polish culture and society. Educated in Russian schools, our mother and father spoke Polish to us at home and Russian occasionally between themselves. They made a great effort to cultivate the right connections in order to get the two of us into the city's most prestigious government-run secondary school for girls, itself an important step toward admission to the university with its *numerus clausus* for Jews.

Father tried to instill in us a haughty disdain for bourgeois norms, conventions, and prejudices. Monica and I were also discouraged from having anything to do with Jewish community life or Zionist activities. One of our friends was the daughter of the editor of an influential conservative and anti-Semitic daily. The father of another Gentile friend was a pastor, the leader of the Vilna Protestant community. He was the only person I ever met before coming to Israel who knew Hebrew, and he sometimes talked to us about the prophets and other biblical figures.

OUR COMFORTABLE existence began to unravel with the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, which led to the occupation of Vilna by the Red Army. Although my parents were distrustful of the Soviets, many of Vilna's Jews saw them as saviors both from the Nazis and from Polish anti-Semitism—until, that is, they began to outlaw Jewish religious and cultural institutions and to deport thousands of families to camps in Siberia and Kazakhstan. At that point, Father's employer offered to help us escape to Sweden, but my parents, fearful of becoming refugees, declined.

The Nazi takeover of Vilna in June 1941 caught Monica and me in the city with our mother. Several weeks later, trying to reach Father in Waka, the three of us were apprehended by Lithuanian police at the outskirts of town and sent straight to the ghetto, a maze of winding narrow lanes in the old Jewish quarter. We seemed to be among the last to enter. I can still hear the ominous sound of a hammer driving nails into the makeshift wooden gate, closing off the ghetto from the main road.

The street was full of confused, frightened people, completely at a loss as they pulled along their crying children and their hastily tied and disintegrating bundles. Propelled by the throng, we found ourselves in a crowded room, amid a mass of Jews of a type my family had never associated with. Lying down to sleep, I was jostled awake every time someone moved or turned, starting a wave of motion through the tightly packed bodies on the floor. There was no water, and after a few hours the stench from the apartment's only toilet became unbearable. I was filled with shock and disbelief: it must all be a preposterous mistake, we should just talk to someone and explain that we were not from here, we did not belong here; not us!

The next morning I saw a body hanging from a street lamp in front of the house and thought I recognized the man's face. A day later, the public-address system announced a general recruiting for labor squads. I decided instantly to volunteer; my mother and sister held back. Exiting the ghetto in company with other young people, I was brought under guard to an army barracks and instructed to peel potatoes and then, when finished, to scrub the stairs. Somewhere between the second and the third floors, a young German officer appeared before me, introducing himself as a chaplain and offering to help. I did not respond. The next day, he repeated the offer, and on the third day I decided to accept. What did I have to lose?

I gave the officer a note for a friend of ours, Danuta Janowiczowna, asking her to bring her own

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identity card and that of her young stepmother to the fence outside the barracks, where there was a steady flow of curious onlookers. That night, back in the ghetto, I persuaded Monica to join me on the work detail, and the next day Danuta appeared at the fence with the cards, wrapped in brown paper, which she threw to the officer.

Having informed the guards that Monica and I would be staying behind in the barracks to clean his rooms, our officer took us at dusk to a small house within the compound where a noisy party was going on. We spent the rest of the night in a storeroom until he came for us and we were able to walk off the base arm-in-arm like three friends. As we took our leave of him, he gave me a small snapshot of himself: a blond young man on skis, laughing, his long scarf fluttering in the wind. He wished us luck. Years later, the photograph lost, I tried to remember his name and realized he had never given it to me.

Our father's secretary, Mr. Zielonkowski, lived in a nearby suburb with his old mother, and we made our way to his house. Though very devoted to Father, he panicked at the sight of us and refused to let us in. A day earlier, a neighbor had been executed on the spot after she was reported talking to a man who looked Jewish. But he accompanied us to the city limits and arranged a rendezvous with our father, who was being kept hostage at the factory to instruct German engineers in the production process.

We met Father in a clearing in the woods near Waka; a heavy sadness enveloped the three of us, and we did not speak much. The thought of our poor mother, left alone in the ghetto, brought home the full weight of our terrible situation. It was clear that Father apprehended—correctly—that he would never see us again.

Two hours later, a young Gypsy woman ferried us across a wide river in her boat. She regarded us with pity, humming a little song, a ballad perhaps, with the refrain, "You so young and pretty, your fate so ugly." Unsure of her intentions, we departed as quickly as we could. Our destination was Ignalino, a farm some 20 miles from Vilna that belonged to Krystyna Adolph, who had been our head teacher for eight years at the *gymnasium*.

A DEVOUT Catholic and a liberal-minded conservative, Krystyna was universally respected for her integrity. But her uncompromising honesty, high moral principles, and demanding requirements of her students could also arouse resentment. Although she was generous in appreciating a good mind and hard work, she was intolerant of dishonesty and low standards.

But she was also human. Days before we were locked up in the ghetto, she had managed—God knows how—to send us a message, saying that if things came to the worst, we should just make our way to Ignalino. To be discovered sheltering Jews would have meant summary execution. Would she, we now wondered, really endanger her own life, and that of her three-year-old daughter, to help us? Was it reasonable—or fair—to expect her to? And what would we do if she refused?

When we arrived, Krystyna was not at home. We sat there waiting, oblivious to the possibility that we might be seen and too exhausted to think or plan. Then we spied her, with her daughter Hania, walking up the path toward the house. She saw us, too, and without a moment's hesitation dropped the little girl's hand and started running, her arms outstretched in welcome. In an instant she was hugging us.

Recently widowed, Krystyna was then about forty. She was a tall, handsome, wholesome-looking woman, her brown hair drawn back in an austere bun, her appearance and manner projecting authority and a no-nonsense personality. Though, as I say, she was highly respected at school, she was also rightly considered a maverick. She did not seem to share either the narrow nationalism that dominated the Polish political scene at the time—although hostile to the Germans, Polish society approved, tacitly or openly, of getting rid of the Jews—or the rabid anti-Semitism of the official Polish Catholic Church. A true Polish patriot, she detested both the Germans and the Russians. But I do not think that her hatred of the Germans was an important factor in her decision to help us. She would have tried to save us, I believe, from Poles as well.

Krystyna was a practicing Catholic, but her piety was not of an institutional or communal type. Her commitment to Christian morality was so strong that it seemed to overrule every conventional norm. She was aware, no doubt, of the extreme danger to which our presence on the farm exposed both herself and Hania, but the obligation to protect her only child seemed secondary in her mind to the absolute, divine imperative to save the lives of those who, without her intervention, were certain to perish. She was a practicing Catholic not in the sense of observing rituals but in the sense that her religious commitments were intrinsic to her decisions and motivations. She did what she believed God wanted her to do and was prepared to bear the consequences—all of them.

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Krystyna was hardly the only rescuer of Jews in the Holocaust; but what made our case unusual was that she not only initiated our rescue but thereafter assumed full and unquestioned responsibility for our fate. Only rarely did this happen: except in the case of rescued children, the role of rescuer was normally limited to providing a hiding place and food or sometimes false papers. No less remarkable was that we lived for over three years not in a hole under the floor or in a chicken coop or attic but sharing our hostess's house, her food, her books, and her daily routines. She, in turn, shared our destiny.

IGNALINO WAS a small farm, bought before the war by the Adolph family so that Krystyna's late husband, a university lecturer ill with tuberculosis, could pursue his work in entomology. The farmhouse was on top of a hill, overlooking the surrounding villages, the nearest of which was about a mile away. At the foot of the hill stood a barn and a shed that served as stable, pigsty, and chicken coop. There were also a field for growing potatoes, a vegetable garden, a well, and a small, immature orchard with two beehives for Krystyna's husband's research. A book on beekeeping from his library taught me how to take care of them; by the end of our second year in Ignalino, the number of hives had grown to six and we had enough honey for ourselves as well as for barter and bribes.

Once it was settled that we would be staying, we took on particular responsibilities. Monica was in charge of the household, the cooking, and the little girl. I saw to our livestock—one horse, a cow, two pigs, a dog, a few chickens, and the beehives—and it was my job to bring water from the well at the bottom of the hill. The path was steep, but in time I worked out a technique for carrying four full buckets at a time. Krystyna and I shared the "man's work": collecting forage for the animals, plowing and sowing, felling trees (illegally) in the government forest and chopping them up for firewood. All three of us labored at planting and gathering potatoes and vegetables, weeding the garden, and picking wild fruit in season.

A task that fell exclusively to me was entertaining German soldiers who would occasionally come by on patrol, looking for Jews and enemy combatants. The entertainment amounted to getting them drunk on our homemade vodka. My specific qualification for the job was that I knew how to pretend to keep pace with our guests while not really drinking myself; this trick I had learned from watching hostesses in the night clubs of Kaunas, where I had managed to attend university for a year. The scary part was getting the soldiers back to their garrison in a nearby village. Driving our poor horse to exhaustion, I would bring the wagon close to the gate of the compound, shove off the dead-drunk soldiers, and rush back, arriving home to the great relief of Krystyna and Monica.

Occasionally Krystyna would travel alone to the nearest town to exchange honey for salt and matches—the only two things we could not produce and could not do without—and to buy her ration of sugar, which we used to feed the bees in winter. Monica and I made every effort to avoid contact with outsiders. To the few people who met us, we were introduced as nieces of Krystyna who had come to help out on the farm. On a few occasions, when the village grapevine warned us of an impending visit by the Armja Krajowa (AK), the fiercely anti-Semitic Polish partisans, we would leave the house and stay in the forest for a couple of days. Had the AK discovered us, they would not have hesitated to deliver us to the authorities or to kill us themselves.

Krystyna's house was furnished with a huge library but, since construction had been interrupted by the war, had no electricity or running water. In the evening, after washing with homemade soap and well water that had been heated on the stove, we would read. This was a complicated operation. One of us would hold aloft a dry wooden plank burning at one end; another would hold a bowl underneath to catch the cinder and ashes; the third would read aloud. Among other things, we read a lot of Christian philosophy; Monica and I were particularly impressed by the spiritual journey of John Henry Newman, the 19th-century Oxford intellectual and convert to Catholicism.

MY MEMORIES of our three-and-a-half years at Ignalino are as of an archipelago of isolated islands in a sea of oblivion. What did we talk about during our long seclusion? What questions preoccupied us, what topics did we raise during our meals, on our long treks, working side by side in the garden? I cannot recall so much as a shred, trivial or significant.

I do remember the drama of our arrival, our subsequent daily routines, our sorties to the forest (with the ever-present bottle of vodka for the forest guard), our sallies to collect forage, and Krystyna's perpetual, half-serious reminder to make sure we were wearing panties: "It may help if somebody attacks you." I can also hear the occasional nighttime knock at our window of Russian partisans. After feeding them, one of us would keep watch

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around the house while they slept on the kitchen floor. I can see clearly their rifles leaning against the wall of our bedroom, hidden from view behind the door, and also their faces, dirty and sad. And I can hear them telling us how they longed for their homes and families.

Nor have I forgotten the sound of the machine-gun fire from the killing fields in the Ponary forest not far away. Sometimes, at night, when a strong wind brought the crackle of the guns especially close, Krystyna would kneel and pray, and we would cry. This was our only indication of what was happening to the Jews of Vilna. Twice, a cloud of smoke rose over nearby villages, and the wind choked us with a terrible burning smell. The villages had been set on fire when the Germans discovered that a resident had been giving aid to an escapee or partisan.

I recall the numberless times when, feeding the animals or cleaning the pigsty, I would look at my parched, cracked hands and feet and try to imagine myself in a party dress. I remember with affection my bees and how—despite the painful stings they gave us—we would bless them as we drank the first yield of honey in the spring, knowing that within a week our sores would heal and our hair would shine again and our mood would improve. I still have an almost mystical belief in the health-giving power of honey, and to this day bees evoke in me a sense of wonder and gratitude.

Then there was the terrible letdown of the fall of 1944, when, after years of praying for this moment, we beheld the first detachment of our liberators galloping through the farm on their little black Cossack horses, shooting into the air and then—straight into our beehives. As a huge, dense cloud of helpless insects hung in the air, the three of us stood there, crying, struck dumb by the incongruity of this anti-climax.

After the war, with Vilna once again the capital of the Lithuanian republic of the USSR, Krystyna was "repatriated" to Sopot, a resort on the Baltic Sea in northwest Poland, where she continued to teach school. Monica and I eventually made our way to Jewish Palestine, where we arrived in 1946, two years before the establishment of the state of Israel. In the following years we remained in close touch with Krystyna, usually by mail and eventually by phone as well. She even visited us in Jerusalem in the late 1950's, on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Rome.

In 1967, Krystyna's daughter Hania was killed in a car accident on the day of her graduation from medical school. We pleaded with Krystyna to come live with us, but she refused. Thinking that she might not wish to accept charity, or to commit herself to a non-Catholic environment, we arranged suitable work and accommodation for her with the Jesuit mission in Jerusalem. But she would not be swayed. In 1984, Krystyna was recognized by Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial and research institute, as a "righteous Gentile"; she was given a medal, and an olive tree was planted in her honor. She died three years later.

During our many decades of correspondence, Krystyna shared with us her thoughts on books, people, world events, and the contemporary social scene. She wrote to us affectionately, as close friends, and was extremely grateful for any sign of attention, like the good chocolates and warm clothes we used to send her. Only once did she make a specific request, asking if, with her eyesight growing dim, we might send her a gadget for threading needles. She also told us matter-of-factly about the curious benefits—like getting priority in queues or a seat on public transport—that had come to her in Poland as a result of her medal, which she wore on the flap of her jacket.

What Krystyna never discussed with us, or even alluded to, was our life together at Ignalino. This could not have been inadvertent. Did it stem from deep personal considerations, possibly not even connected with us? Was it because she wanted to forestall expressions of indebtedness or gratitude? It would be easy to believe that, like all truly good and honest people, Krystyna saw what she had done as normal and natural, and that drawing attention to it would embarrass her. I wonder, though, if there was not a deeper explanation for her reticence.

At Ignalino, Krystyna's dominance in matters big and small had seemed natural to us. Even leaving aside the fact that we had already been her pupils in school for eight years, she was older than we, possessed a kind of innate authority, and was the mistress of the house. It was quite obvious that responsibility for what happened to all of us was ultimately hers. I cannot recall any sign of doubt or hesitation on her part, or a single instance when she tried to shift the initiative for our safety to us. We were all in the same boat, she was the captain, and we were to survive or die together.

I remember only one occasion when Krystyna insisted on including us in a decision. It was at the end of our second year at Ignalino. A wounded Russian soldier, an escapee from a POW transport,

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had come to our door asking for food and shelter for a few days. "Well, girls," Krystyna asked, "what shall we do?" Not only would the soldier be a burden on our meager resources, but he would greatly increase the risk to all of us. Sheltering a Russian escapee, like sheltering a Jew, carried the penalty of summary execution. Still, the decision to let Nikolai stay was unanimous.

To some extent, I think, our voting to take in Nikolai eased our own sense of guilt: now Monica and I were no longer the only ones endangering Krystyna and Hania. But perhaps the main reason we were pleased to have him was that he made us into rescuers ourselves. Just sharing in the decision marked a welcome change in our normally passive and dependent lives. In a small way, we, too, were now on the giving side. As I laundered Nikolai's filthy clothes and nursed his infected wound, I could feel that I had stepped into Krystyna's huge shoes.

Our admiration for Krystyna was boundless. But as time went on, the extent of our dependence had started to gnaw at us. We became, in a way, prisoners of our gratitude (a literal translation of the Hebrew expression, *asir toda*). Could we continue to receive so much without ever repaying the debt? How long could we go on exposing Krystyna and Hania to such terrible danger? How could we go on living in total dependence on another person, kind and generous though she was, without in any way exercising independent judgment or initiating action of our own? As we began to think of our predicament in this way, Monica and I became restless, finding more and more things to resent, more and more occasions to be unhappy and frustrated.

Since even a verbal rebellion against Krystyna's authority would have been preposterous, the only possible target of our anger was ourselves. In later years, my sister could recall actual moments of such revolt on my part, when, in a pathetic and futile attempt to assert myself, I would determine to leave Ignalino. But Monica was always the more reasonable one. She would wisely announce that she could never participate in such an absurd venture, adding the psychologically shrewd point that Krystyna *needed* us on the farm. After everything she had done on our behalf, leaving would be a selfish and unfair act.

Yet Monica, too, was troubled by the glaring asymmetry of our relations. Her attempt to reduce the imbalance was characteristically non-violent though no less self-destructive. She concluded that we could best respond to Krystyna's gift by means of a gift of our own. Though Krystyna had never tried to proselytize us, our guess was that she would be gratified if we were to convert to Catholicism.

Both of us recognized that this, too, would constitute an act of submission, rather than marking a positive rehabilitation of our wounded pride. But our Jewish identity was not particularly strong, and Krystyna's example, not to mention our reading of Cardinal Newman and others, had made Catholicism rather attractive to us. If we were ever liberated, we decided, we would adopt the Catholic faith, hoping to repay Krystyna in the only currency that might at least partly compensate the immensity of her gift to us.

WHILE RUMMAGING among some old documents and souvenirs about a year ago, I found a mother-of-pearl crucifix, a rosary, and a Christian Bible, with a loving inscription by Krystyna, dated October 1944. It brought to mind a long-buried and now hazy memory of a visit to a village priest. A preliminary conversation about our newfound faith? An actual conversion ceremony? I simply cannot recall, and neither could my sister Monica, who died last autumn.

I do know that the hectic pace and often traumatic character of events after our liberation left us little room for serious reflection. I also know that, by the time we settled in Israel, our solemn resolve to become Catholics had vanished, along with all memory of it. Could we, indeed, ever have made peace with ourselves had it not been for the grace extended to us by such forgetting?

As for Krystyna, I still wonder how she took the fact that we ultimately reneged on our decision. Was she disappointed? Perhaps. But she may also have felt that it restored her gift to what she had intended it to be—something unreciprocable and perfectly pure.

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OBSERVATIONS

Living with Art

Terry Teachout

A YEAR ago, I bought a copy of *Jestina's Reds*, a lithograph by the American painter Nell Blaine, and hung it over my mantelpiece. It was the first work of art I had ever purchased. Since then, I have bought fourteen others, nearly all of them prints—lithographs, etchings, screenprints, monotypes—by such noted modern American artists as Milton Avery, Stuart Davis, Helen Frankenthaler, John Marin, and Fairfield Porter. The living room of my New York apartment, on whose white walls these pieces hang, now looks like a gallery.

As recently as a decade ago, it would never have occurred to me to buy an art print, for the very good reason that I had spent next to no time visiting galleries or museums. Today, though, my involvement with the visual arts is a passion. In addition to the pieces on my walls, I own dozens of books about art, ranging from slender collections of criticism to fat *catalogues raisonnés*. Whenever I travel to other cities, large or small, I go out of my way to visit their museums. I even contribute occasional art reviews to the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*.

Still, it is a long step from looking at art or even knowing about art to buying art, a step taken by few unmonied people nowadays—though, as I have learned, it is surprisingly easy to do. So far as I am aware, only one of my close friends has ever bought a painting or print for aesthetic reasons alone, and unlike me, this friend is wealthy. My own "collection" (a pretentious word, but I cannot think of a better one) is of no great monetary value, nor are any of the pieces in it especially rare. I bought four of them on eBay, the web-based auction site.

I sometimes wonder why middle-class people of my generation (I was born in 1956) feel so diffident about owning art. Are we under the mistaken impression that it is necessary to spend large amounts of money in order to own something beautiful? Or are we simply less interested in the visual arts than our elders? A little bit of both, I suspect. It is undeniably true that the price of big-ticket art has skyrocketed in our lifetimes, fueled by the stock-market boom of the 80's. More important, though, is the extent to which taste in art has come to be driven by the highly publicized trends that now dominate the postmodern art establishment.

Traditional painting, we are told, is dead. To judge by what one reads in the popular press, this is not hard to believe. The first museum exhibition I ever covered, the Brooklyn Museum of Art's now-notorious *Sensation* (1999), featured items like a bisected pig floating in a formaldehyde-filled case. Anyone who began paying close attention to art at that time could surely be forgiven for having second thoughts about collecting, and for sticking to framed museum posters of the kind that once hung on my walls.

So what made me—what would make anyone—do otherwise?

IN RETROSPECT, what I now find puzzling is that it took me so long to start looking at art in the first place. Although I grew up in a small Missouri town far from museums, I spent my college years only a few miles from Kansas City's Nelson-

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Atkins Museum of Art, where I could easily have devoted all the time in the world to Caravaggio's *Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness*, Monet's *Boulevard des Capucines*, and any number of other masterpieces. Yet I visited the Nelson-Atkins only once while I lived in Kansas City, and I took no college courses in art. Outside of isolated visits to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and Museum of Modern Art, I never set foot in a museum, in Missouri or elsewhere, for years afterward.

The only explanation I can offer for this blind spot in my aesthetic life is that the art forms with which I was most deeply involved as a young man were music and writing. For musicians and writers, visual stimuli are simply not primary experiences, nor can books and printed music properly be spoken of as art objects (though a well-made book may certainly be beautiful). My eyes were accustomed to decoding printed symbols, not to looking at the world and its contents for the pure sensuous pleasure of reveling in their outward appearance.

As it happens, it was my discovery of dance that taught me to look for the sake of looking. I saw my first ballet by George Balanchine, that most profoundly musical of choreographers, in 1989, and in time I came to appreciate dancing in its own right, rather than as a means of visualizing music. Once that happened, it was inevitable that I would begin to view paintings in the same way.

In 1995, on a return trip to Kansas City, I was given a private tour of the Nelson-Atkins Museum, which was then hosting a traveling exhibition of American art. As I viewed the paintings in the show, I felt the first stirrings of an unfamiliar sensation. Later that same day, I went to the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, where I saw a 1960 painting by Fairfield Porter called *Wheat*. It is deceptively simple—a bluish-gray rectangle of open sky and a smaller rectangle of tan-colored wheat, separated by a farmhouse, three trees, and a barn.[1]

Though *Wheat* is one of Porter's best paintings, there is nothing obviously prepossessing about its uncomplicated composition. But something about *Wheat* struck me with the force of revelation. Was it the way in which the artist freely yet evocatively portrayed a landscape as familiar to me as the house in which I had grown up? Whatever the reason, it spoke to me as had no other painting, and I went straight to the museum shop to find out more about the man who made it.

The shop had no books about Porter in stock. Instead, I found *Art in Its Own Terms: Selected Criticism, 1935-1975*, a paperback volume of Porter's art reviews.[2] By a stroke of luck, I had been awakened to the pleasures of painting by one of the finest artist-critics of the 20th century, a major American painter who wrote about art with the same distinction that the composer Virgil Thomson brought to his writing about music. Like Thomson, Porter had a plain-spoken, no-nonsense style that emphasized description over theorizing—"criticism," he wrote, "should tell you what is there"—and his thoughtful words helped me make sense of the transforming experience I had undergone. As I read what he had to say about painting and painters, I became excited about art—really excited—for the first time in my life.

A few months later, I went to a Cézanne retrospective at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where I had a similarly revelatory encounter with *The Garden at Les Lauves*.[3] This time I was ready, for Porter had already showed me how to think about Cézanne. After that, there was no turning back. I haunted the museums of New York and read everything about art I could get my hands on. I soon contrived to turn myself into a passable imitation of a connoisseur, and somewhere along the way, probably without knowing it, I had prepared myself to buy.

THOUGH I have always been an aesthete, I have no special attachment to objects, and I am not a natural-born collector. When I first moved to Manhattan, though, I did notice the etchings and small lithographs by famous artists hanging on the walls of the apartments of older middle-class New Yorkers, and from time to time it even occurred to me that I might like to own such things myself. In fact, I innocently supposed that owning art was a normal part of the New York style, like eating sushi or dressing all in black.

I soon learned, however, that people of my age were no more likely to own inexpensive art of high quality than they were to go to the ballet. Rich people bought rich people's art, while the rest of us bought posters or nothing. The prospect of walking into a gallery and talking to the owner intimidated me, and I also took it for granted that the era was long past when someone like me could afford to buy anything worth having.

What changed my mind was the Internet. In the late 90's, print dealers across the country began launching websites on which they advertised their wares, and some even posted the prices. I was already teaching myself about prints: works published in multiple copies that cost only a fraction of the price of a painting by the same artist, thus putting them within reach of art lovers of comparatively modest means.[4] Now I began to consider the possibility of buying them.

What separates a limited-edition print from a museum poster or a "framed reproduction" is that the former, unlike the latter, is largely or entirely handmade, is produced in small quantities, and is (usually)

[1] *Wheat* can be viewed online at the Kemper Museum's website, www.kemperart.org.

[2] *Art in Its Own Terms* has just been reprinted by Moyer Bell, 288 pp., $14.95.

[3] *The Garden at Les Lauves* is owned by the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. It has been reproduced in numerous books about Cézanne and can also be viewed on the web by visiting www.artchive.com

[4] The least expensive piece I own cost $200, the most expensive $4,800.

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signed and numbered by the artist, who creates it with the technical assistance of printers familiar with the particular medium in which he is working. No honest collector will deny that this last feature, the signature, is part of the appeal; but to buy a mediocre lithograph simply because it is signed by Joan Miró or Marc Chagall is only a baby step up from collecting autographs. The best printmakers, from Rembrandt and Dürer to Avery and Frankenthaler, have always been drawn to the medium for its own sake, and their prints are worth having not merely in lieu of a more expensive painting but because they are fully realized creations in themselves.

Anyone who doubts this need only look at a copy of *Piazza Rotunda*, a limited-edition aquatint by William Bailey that I bought directly from Crown Point Press in San Francisco, never having seen anything other than a thumbnail reproduction. It is a still life of a miscellaneous assortment of eggs and kitchenware arranged on a circular tabletop in a shallow, strangely empty room. When I opened the package and saw the piece "in the flesh" for the first time, I actually gasped, stunned by its subdued intensity and fineness of line. Unlike a poster, *Piazza Rotunda* has a subtly textured, three-dimensional surface, created by the impressing of the etched plate into the thick paper on which the image is printed. Even if it were unsigned, I would have wanted to own it simply because of the way it looks. In fact, that is the only good reason to buy a work of art: so that you can look at it every day, as often as you want.

But what could I afford that I would want to look at every day? Two of my well-to-do acquaintances are serious collectors, and knowing them nearly caused me to quit before I got started. To the aspiring collector of modest means, few things are more demoralizing than the spectacle of a Park Avenue living room whose contents include some twenty-odd canvases by a half-dozen important painters.

I knew I would have to cut my aesthetic coat to fit my financial cloth. Once again, though, luck was with me. I had always loved American modernism in all its myriad manifestations. From F. Scott Fitzgerald and Aaron Copland to Louis Armstrong and Fred Astaire, our best artists have spoken in the crisply empirical, immediately accessible tone of voice now acknowledged by the whole world as all-American. In every sense of the phrase, they spoke my language. No sooner did I begin to look at paintings than I found myself similarly drawn to the work of American modernists. I discovered that many of them had also been prolific printmakers, and a few months' intensive study gave me a fairly clear idea of which of their works were available and how much they might cost. Next came hours of surfing the web for dealers, initially for fun, then in earnest.

I bought Nell Blaine's *Jestina's Reds* because it was both handsome and inexpensive (having been published in a large edition). Beyond that, I knew I wanted to own an etching by John Twachtman, the greatest of the American impressionists; a print of some kind by Helen Frankenthaler, the abstract expressionist who is my favorite living artist; and a lithograph by Fairfield Porter, who had opened my eyes to the world of visual art.

The Twachtman and Frankenthaler were easy enough to find, the Porter somewhat trickier until Justin Spring, Porter's biographer, directed me to a helpful dealer. Within a matter of weeks I had bought *Dock at Newport*, an elegant but affordable 1893 etching by Twachtman of which only 30 lifetime impressions have been located; *Grey Fireworks*, a large Frankenthaler screenprint commissioned by Lincoln Center four years ago; and *Isle au Haut*, the last lithograph Porter completed before his death in 1975. The Porter and Frankenthaler prints are based on pre-existing paintings, but they are wholly satisfying on their own; no sooner had I hung them than I knew I was on the right track.

While not a collector by temperament, I do have an orderly mind, and I immediately grasped the difference between a roomful of unrelated artworks and a shapely, coherent collection. I realized that what I wanted to do was assemble a group of prints that told the story of American modernism—but from *my* point of view, not that of the Museum of Modern Art or anyone else. For all my boundless admiration of Frankenthaler and her contemporaries, I had come to feel that MoMA and its single-minded curators have given cruelly short shrift to the American modernists who preceded them, as well as to those later figurative painters who, like Porter, were influenced by abstract expressionism but never felt obliged to break with representation.

Once I got the idea for what a witty friend of mine dubbed *la Musée Teachout*, my buying became more focused. The four prints I already owned fit neatly into my scheme, and by the end of 2003 I had essentially accomplished my goal. *Dock at Newport* epitomizes the break with literal representation that opened the door to modernism, while the pre-World War II American modernists are well represented in etchings by John Marin and Milton Avery and a later serigraph by Stuart Davis. *Grey Fireworks* and a Joan Mitchell lithograph take care of abstract expressionism, and *Isle au Haut* has become the centerpiece of a suite of prints by Blaine, Jane Freilicher, Wolf Kahn, Alex Katz, and Neil Welliver, all figurative artists whom Porter knew, admired, and reviewed. Finally, *Piazza Rotunda* stands for post-Porter developments in figuration.[5] As a

[5] I also own a lovely painted ceramic tile called *View From My Studio*, signed "Nell Blaine" and dated "Dec. 1966." While the seller could not verify its provenance, I have every reason to think it authentic.

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historical footnote, I also acquired *Paysage du Midi*, a 1925 lithograph by Pierre Bonnard, the French post-impressionist painter whose vivid palette and daringly free approach to representation inspired Porter and his peers.

At this point I stopped making new purchases. I had spent all the money I could spare—perhaps a bit too much, as collectors are wont to do—and had run out of walls. Alas, I still have a couple of holes to plug: the Teachout Museum will not be complete without a Marsden Hartley lithograph, and I know a Kenneth Noland monotype that would go quite nicely with *Grey Fireworks*. Nor will I rest easy until I own an Avery woodcut and two more Porter lithographs: *Broadway* (which I have chosen to adorn the jacket of my next book) and *Ocean II*.

Of course, I have no idea whether I will be able to afford any of these pieces if and when I track them down. I am also uncomfortably aware that only five of the artists represented in my collection (Bailey, Frankenthaler, Freilicher, Katz, and Welliver) are still alive, and that I have yet to buy a work of art by an unknown artist—the test of a true collector. I want very much to explore the work of contemporary painters and printmakers who have chosen to ignore postmodern trends and go their own way, just as Porter and Avery went theirs. To do that, I need to take a pause and learn more than I know now.

But whatever my reservations—and no collector is ever entirely satisfied—I am happy with the Teachout Museum just as it is. Not only is it a joy to behold, but its beauties have had the beneficial effect of making me want to spend less time rattling around Manhattan, fulfilling the hectic duties of a freelance critic, and more time sitting in my living room, communing with the works of art I have so carefully assembled. Whether it will help me to live longer is an open question, but collecting art, even on a modest scale, has definitely made my interior life richer than ever before.

NOT LONG before I called a halt to my buying, I happened to read *The Substance of Style: How the Rise of Aesthetic Value is Remaking Commerce, Culture, and Consciousness*, the much-discussed book about postmodern design by the libertarian columnist Virginia Postrel.[6] In it, she makes the following observation:

> Artists and art collectors have long mocked the idea that someone might purchase a work to go with a couch—an insult to serious art. Perhaps as a result, the wall-décor industry has been the home of generic, clichéd prints. But not all visually sophisticated consumers want art to impress their friends, hobnob with the gallery crowd, or make money as an investment. Some just want a more attractive living room. In response, an unsnobbish middle market is offering prints and photographs to go with stylish furniture. . . . Crate & Barrel sells framed reproductions of Mark Rothko paintings for $499. Sales are growing at double-digit rates.

This passage could only have been written by someone who does not know the first thing about the meaning and function of art. Not that I blame Postrel—I am, after all, a newcomer myself—but I was nonetheless forcibly struck by how little her words correspond with my own experience.

To begin with, Postrel seems to think that the only people who buy "serious" art instead of mass-market "framed reproductions" are snobs out to make money and impress other snobs. Had those been my motives, I would have failed dismally. To be sure, visitors to my apartment almost always claim to admire my art (some more believably than others), but no one has ever glanced at my walls and said, "I see you have a Katz" or "Gee, that's a really nice Bailey." Indeed, the names of the artists whose work I own have proved unfamiliar to all but a handful of my guests, though anyone who has read an introductory survey of 20th-century American art would recognize most of them.[7]

In any case, the point of a Katz or Bailey—or a Rothko—is how it looks, not who made it, much less what it cost. To be sure, the "visually sophisticated consumer" who likes Rothko's palette and wants to have it in his home can do so by purchasing a reproduction of a Rothko painting. If the reproduction is well made, the colors will be roughly similar. But no one who has lived with a handmade art print like *Piazza Rotunda* can doubt for a moment that this similarity is but a small part of what gives "serious" art its irreproducible force and significance.

Putting together the Teachout Museum taught me this essential fact. It also taught me that the difference between looking at paintings in museums and buying art for your home is like the difference between playing solitaire and poker. Once you start spending money, even if it is only a few hundred dollars, you find out what you really like and what you can live without.

At the same time, buying art can broaden your tastes in unexpected ways. I value color over line—the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., assembled by a color-drunk private collector, is the American museum I love best—yet I have discovered that I am also powerfully attracted to the monochrome etchings of Twachtman, Marin, and Avery, three superlative colorists whom Duncan Phillips collected in depth. As someone to whom abstract painting had always appealed in theory because of its seeming resemblance to music, I was also surprised to learn how strongly I prefer loosely representative figurative painting to rigorous abstraction.

[6] HarperCollins, 256 pp., $24.95.

[7] Nine of them, for instance, are mentioned by name in Robert Hughes's *American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America* (1997), a book written for an educated popular audience.

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(Even the two abstract pieces in my collection, *Grey Fireworks* and Joan Mitchell's *Tree II*, make reference to the visible world.)

Not only does a collector learn what he likes, he develops a practical, even earthy view of the works he owns. Whenever I go to a gallery now, I want to know how much the paintings cost—and if the owner has neglected to post a price list, I ask. I know that *every* work of art in the world has a price tag, and this knowledge has caused me to think much harder than ever before about the complex relationship between cost and quality. When neither scarcity or fashion is at issue, what accounts for the difference in price between roughly similar objects? While certain rules of thumb are generally valid (the bigger and more brightly colored a painting, the more it will cost), the art market is a strange and unpredictable entity, and I still find myself puzzled at times by its inscrutable workings.

Still, if cost and quality are not necessarily the same thing, they are nonetheless related, because the art market fluctuates according to the preferences of its participants—preferences symbolized by their willingness to spend their own money, sometimes at considerable personal sacrifice. Such preferences are by definition serious, and thus deserve to be taken seriously. Individual collectors may have bad taste, and the taste of a whole generation can be distorted by fashion, but over the long haul, those who are most serious about art render the collective judgment of posterity. As the critic Clement Greenberg rightly observed:

> One of the wonderful things about art is that everybody has to discover the criteria of quality for himself. They can't be communicated by word or demonstration. Yet they are objective. . . . You have to find out for yourself by looking and experiencing. And the people who try hardest and look hardest end up, over the ages, by agreeing with one another in the main.

Living with art teaches you things about the criteria of quality that cannot be learned in any other way, things I am still in the process of learning. If I had to guess, I would say the finest piece I own is Milton Avery's *March at a Table*, closely followed by *Isle au Haut* and *Piazza Rotunda*. But there are many times when I would rather look at *Grey Fireworks*, Stuart Davis's jazzy *Any as Given*, or the gossamer untitled Wolf Kahn monotype that now hangs over my mantelpiece. This never-ending cycle of looking and experiencing is one of the most instructive aspects of living with art.

To see a painting or print on a daily basis is to learn what makes some works durable and others ephemeral. Experienced collectors speak of how certain paintings "go dead on the wall," meaning that their appeal fades over time and with familiarity. So far, all fifteen of my pieces are still alive and well, but I never cease to be fascinated by how my preferences shift from day to day.

In addition to all these things, the Teachout Museum has taught me about the social function of art, for the collection gives pleasure to my visitors as well as to me. They may not know much about art, but they usually know what they like, and I always ask which piece they like best, a question that never fails to tell me something interesting about the person answering it. Most opt for the Kahn, though I was delighted when a jazz singer from Brazil picked Alex Katz's *Late July II*, a lithograph whose poised stillness reminded me of her own quiet, gentle voice.

With prices constantly on the rise, it may well be that my collecting days are over. The same Internet that made it easy to find bargains has now made it harder, by creating a worldwide "single market" in prints. Then, too, figurative modernists like Porter and Avery are finally becoming more popular, and thus more costly.

So, unless I write a best-seller or inherit a large sum from a rich aunt of whose existence I am as yet unaware, I may spend the rest of my life with the works of art I bought last year and no others. Or I could be forced to sell several pieces in order to pay an unexpected bill. Or my apartment might catch on fire, leaving me with only enough time to grab a single print before beating a hasty retreat. Which raises the inevitable question: which piece would I keep if I could keep just one?

If I had to choose this very minute, it would be a 1921 etching by John Marin called *Downtown. The El*, a nervous cubist spiderweb that miraculously suggests the quivering energy of life in lower Manhattan. I never thought I would be able to afford a Marin, but this particular one is an anomaly, a re-strike published in 1924 in a special pencil-signed edition of 500 offered to subscribers to the *New Republic*. I've been trying to imagine a modern-day counterpart of such an offer, albeit without much success. (Possibly *O: The Oprah Magazine* could offer tubes of Vaseline signed by Matthew Barney?)

I look lovingly at my copy of *Downtown. The El* each time I pass by, marveling at the chain of coincidence by which this exquisite specimen of prewar American modernism passed from Marin's hands to mine. How many people have owned it? Did the last owner care for it as much as I do? Or was it hung in a dark hallway, there to be ignored and gather dust? Whatever its provenance, it has taught me a priceless lesson, which is that living with a work of art is the ultimate test of its quality—and the ultimate way of appreciating its beauty. I am lucky to own *Downtown. The El*, and luckier still to have wanted to own it. I hope someone else will want it as much, someday.

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The "Geneva Accord"

Is it the way to lasting peace in the Middle East or to disaster?

With great hoopla, two private citizens, unconnected with and unauthorized by their respective governments, have taken it upon themselves to produce the draft of a "peace treaty," which would finally bring an end to the century-old struggle between Jews and Arabs. The treaty, the "Geneva Accord," would almost immediately bring about a "Palestinian" state.

What are the facts?

Negotiators without standing: Yossi Beilin, the "negotiator" for the Israeli side, has no official standing at all. He is a former minister of justice, but has been repudiated by the Israeli electorate. His Arab counterpart Yasser Abed Rabbo has no standing either. He is said to have Yasser Arafat's ear, whatever that may be worth.

This is extraordinary. It is as if an American citizen, say, for instance, Al Gore or Pat Buchanan, were to negotiate with an Iraqi confidant of Saddam Hussein about the American-Iraqi relationship.

Apart from the sheer illegitimacy of this process, provisions of this Accord need examination. They are, without exception, damaging to Israel, which, as usual, is asked to make all "concessions." If this Accord were to come to fruition, it would threaten the very survival of Israel as a Jewish state. The Accord cedes the Temple Mount, the Jewish people's holiest of holies, the focus of its two-thousand-year yearning, to the "Palestinians." Jews could be admitted only at the sufferance of the Muslims. Why would any Jew concede the very soul of his people and of his nation? Would the Muslims concede Mecca, would the Catholic Church concede the Vatican?

But there are equally or perhaps even more weighty matters than these "sentimental" considerations. Under this Accord, Israel would agree to almost total withdrawal from Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and Gaza, dramatically increasing the number of "settlers" who would have to be repatriated. Since the Accord considers them to be "illegal occupiers" no compensation would be conceded to them. Under the Accord, the high ground dominating the Tel Aviv region and the central coastal strip would be in "Palestinian" hands. More than seventy per cent of Israel's population lives in that area and most of its industrial and military capacity and its major civilian airport are located there. Only a fool could believe that the Arabs, who have broken every provision of the vaunted Oslo Accord, would not avail themselves of the opportunity of critically damaging or, if possible, totally destroying the Israeli state.

Israel naked before its enemies: Further, the suggested transfer of the Jordan River Valley, Israel's first line of defense against attack from the east, would put it into an untenable military position. Any safety net, any viable security for Israel would disappear. Israel would lie virtually naked and helpless before its mortal enemies if this disastrous Accord were ever implemented.

> "The Geneva Accord is a Trojan Horse, meant to destroy the State of Israel. The world and Israel should firmly repudiate it."

The Accord is ambiguous about the so-called "right of return." There is apparently no longer insistence that *all* "refugees" be allowed to settle in Israel. The "refugees" are the descendants of those who, at the urging of the Arab armies that invaded the Jewish state at the very day of its founding, fled the fighting. There were about 500,000 of them; they have now miraculously swelled to five million. Nobody talks about returning the millions of German refugees to what is now Poland and Czechoslovakia, and nobody dreams of compensating them. But under the Geneva Accord, all those "refugees" are to be paid "compensation," which could amount to hundreds of billions of dollars. Significantly, no compensation is countenanced for the about 800,000 Jews, who were expelled or who had to flee for their lives from the Arab countries, where in most cases they had lived for over 1,000 years.

Under the Geneva Accord, Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), which, together with Gaza, would form the "Palestinian" state, is to be free of Jews, made *judenrein*, in line with the Nazi model. But how about the over one million Arabs who live and prosper in Israel? Would it not be fair and reciprocal if they were transferred from "Israel proper" and were moved into the new "Palestinian" state? The Geneva Accord does not address this obvious question, and nobody else does either.

If the Geneva Accord were accepted and implemented, it would be an unmitigated disaster for Israel. It would give its holiest site, the very essence of the Zionist dream, to its Arab enemies. It would accept perhaps hundreds of thousands of so-called "refugees," which would thus finish Israel as a Jewish state. It would make Israel militarily indefensible. The Geneva Accord is a Trojan Horse, meant to destroy the State of Israel. The world and Israel should firmly repudiate it.

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Books in Review

To the Manner Born

Family Circle:
The Boudins and the
Aristocracy of the Left
by Susan Braudy
Knopf. 460 pp. $27.95

Reviewed by
Kay S. Hymowitz

On the morning of October 20, 1981, Kathy Boudin, a Bryn Mawr graduate and the daughter of Leonard Boudin, a renowned left-wing lawyer, dropped off her infant son with a sitter near her apartment in New York City and went to work—which, in her case, involved helping a group of self-professed revolutionaries rob a Brinks truck in nearby suburban Rockland county. The botched job left three men dead, including two police officers, and landed Boudin in prison.

Susan Braudy's reference to "aristocracy" in the subtitle of *Family Circle*, her new book about Kathy Boudin and her clan, is pierced with irony. The Boudins were political radicals, of course, but they were also the Astors of a snobbish and glamorous elite. The family patriarch, Leonard's uncle Louis Boudin, was a prominent labor lawyer in the early decades of the 20th century who had helped to found the U.S. Socialist party. Jean, Leonard's beautiful but long-suffering and emotionally frail wife, hung around in her Philadelphia youth with Clifford Odets and other radical intellectuals and followed the breastfeeding advice of her friend Margaret Mead when her first child was born in 1939.

Under Jean's shaky supervision, the Boudins held regular salon-style Sunday brunches at their Greenwich Village home, bringing together Leonard's famed clients—Paul Robeson, Benjamin Spock, Daniel Ellsberg, Joan Baez—with other notables of the Left. These included the journalist I.F. Stone, who happened to be married to Jean's sister. The couple's first-born child, Michael Boudin, graduated at the top of his class from Harvard Law School in 1965 and clerked for Supreme Court Justice John Marshall Harlan. Such was Michael's brilliance that his father, who had been an indifferent student himself (accepted at City College only after some paternal string-pulling), was willing to forgive his son's conservative politics and embrace him as the crowned prince of the Boudin dynasty.

For Kathy, the Boudin's younger child, the family legacy was far more damaging. According to Braudy, Kathy was in Oedipal thrall to her father, a fact even more significant to the girl's development than her mother's emotional instability. Leonard Boudin was the sort of man for whom the phrase "Hide your daughters!" was invented—a narcissistic and seemingly insatiable Lothario whose affairs took in clients, family friends, his children's psychologist, Fidel Castro's mistress, and a pregnant friend of his daughter. Denied her father's erotic attention, Kathy instead sought to win his love by becoming, Braudy suggests, a kind of left-wing Joan of Arc.

In 1961, and to the disappointment of her Harvard-worshipping family,

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Kathy enrolled at Bryn Mawr, where she quickly earned a reputation as a civil-rights activist. Her achievements included a successful protest in support of the black maids who served the students their meals, and demonstrations at a local Woolworth's against the chain's segregated Southern lunch counters. Kathy was also known for her sanctimony. She would scornfully interrogate her classmates about their political bona fides, and in one famous instance, when she felt she was not getting enough support for a planned protest, threw her dinner plate against the wall. Still, her intellectual ambition and passion dazzled her peers, who voted her "the most admired" member of the class of 1965.

In the years after college, Kathy's radicalism steadily intensified—a trend closely tied, as Braudy tells it, to her determination to earn her father's respect. Working for Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) at a poverty project in Cleveland, she became involved with other young activists now mobilized by their opposition to the Vietnam war. In 1968, SDS helped to spearhead the historic street protests outside the Democratic convention in Chicago. When Kathy got arrested, Leonard, who had recently defended Benjamin Spock and William Sloane Coffin, Jr. against conspiracy charges for their anti-war activities, came to her rescue.

But after the high of the frenzied street demonstrations, Kathy was ready to define heroism on a grander scale. She and her allies formed a splinter group called the Weathermen and began viewing themselves as warriors against a "sick bourgeois society." Spending their days doing paramilitary exercises and denying themselves all ordinary comforts—Diana Oughton, a Bryn Mawr classmate, killed and ate an alley cat to prove her mettle—they considered themselves the vanguard of a youth revolution. In 1970, while attempting to make an antipersonnel bomb, Weatherman Terry Robbins short-circuited the timer and blew up the elegant townhouse on 11th Street in Greenwich Village where he and his "comrades" had been staying. The blast killed three, including Oughton and Robbins. Kathy, who had been in the upstairs sauna, narrowly escaped.

FOR THE next eleven years, Boudin stayed underground, planning symbolic acts of "revolutionary violence." The Weathermen took credit for at least twenty such attacks during the 1970's, including a bomb detonated by Kathy and Bernadine Dohrn in the ladies' restroom of the Capitol building, which they considered "a monument to U.S. domination all over the planet." Throughout these years, Leonard continued to meet with the daughter whose face adorned FBI most-wanted posters. Braudy reports that he even helped in brainstorming sessions about potential targets and that he "relished the cops-and-robbers aspect of their assignations."

By the late 1970's, even as the Weathermen had fallen apart and Dohrn, now the mother of two boys, made plans to leave life underground, Kathy dug in deeper. She and her boyfriend David Gilbert (with whom she now had a baby) began working with radical black groups who were even more outlandish—and more conventionally criminal—than the Weathermen. It was one of these groups, the Black Liberation Army of "Doc" Shakur, a drug counselor who recruited his clients for "revolutionary purposes," that finally brought an end to Kathy's adventures.

Seeing their role as entirely subservient to Doc and other "third-world revolutionaries," Kathy and her radical friends unquestioningly followed his orders, even after the group began spending an increasing amount of its loot on cocaine and referring to its white helpers as "crackers." When Doc's men held up the Brinks truck that fateful day, Gilbert drove the getaway van, with Kathy in the passenger seat beside him. The three murders committed by the gang left nine children fatherless. Though Kathy had at no point held a gun, she received a sentence of twenty years to life for her role in the crime.

For the next two decades, in an irony that the severe Kathy herself would never be capable of appreciating, the woman who had left her fourteen-month-old child with a babysitter while she aided a group of cocaine-hyped thugs spent her time teaching parenting skills to fellow inmates and earning a master's degree in education, as well as counseling AIDS patients. In 1981, when she sat in the silver U-Haul getaway van with David Gilbert, she was thirty-seven. This past fall, when she was finally paroled, Leonard Boudin's daughter was approaching her 60th birthday.

THOUGH FILLED with fascinating detail, *Family Circle* too often has the feel of a multipart profile for a women's magazine: strong on personalities, weak on history and context (the Vietnam war, for instance, seems to start just a few days before the Chicago convention of 1968). The same superficiality prompts Braudy to present Kathy's radicalism as the product of a dysfunctional family life. But that is too easy. After all, there were many educated young extremists like Kathy, and none of them had parents like Leonard and Jean Boudin.

In fact, most of them were the children—and a remarkable number were the daughters—of ordinary middle-class parents intent on living out the postwar American dream and, as often as not, firm in their liberal views. Young women like Dohrn, or Susan Rosenberg, one of Kathy's accomplices in the Brinks robbery, or like Philip Roth's fictional creation Merry, the bomb-throwing daughter in *American Pastoral*, were driven not by Oedipal longing but by ideology. Their radicalism was more than a reaction to

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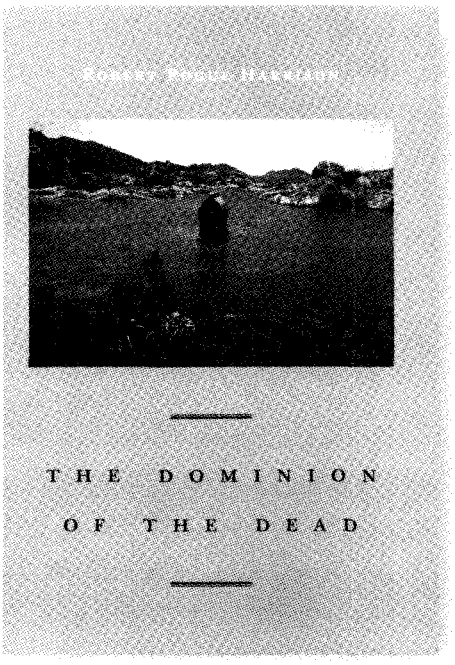

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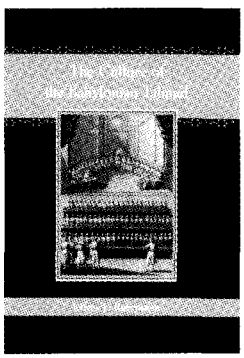

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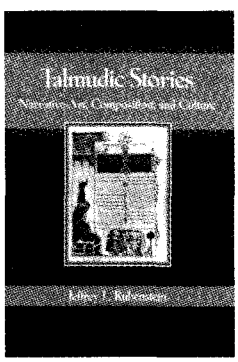

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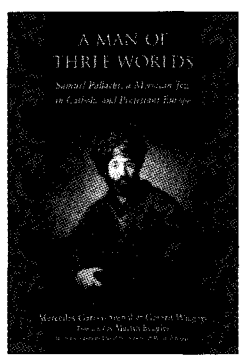

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the brutalities of the Vietnam war and racial segregation. It sprang from a careless nihilism and an arrogant hatred of "Amerika," for its bourgeois comforts, for its aspirations to tolerance, for its very success.

What Braudy does provide, with her psychological focus, is considerable insight into the pedigree of the New Left's extremism. Beginning with Uncle Louis, the Boudins' politics were steeped in abstraction, moral arrogance, and a callous contempt for ordinary people who did not fit their romantic image of the proletariat. For her part, Jean, scornful of petty bourgeois ambitions, did not even invite her pickle-salesman father to her wedding. As Braudy astutely observes, Jean was part of a crowd that loved the entire working class, except "their own tired parents."

Indeed, by devoting so much attention to Leonard, Braudy may understate just how much Jean's crude leftism helped to stunt Kathy's character. For all of his flaws, Leonard comes across as less of an ideologue than his wife. On the day in 1970 when Kathy and her Weathermen friends inadvertently blew up the townhouse on 11th Street, Jean happened to be strolling nearby with a bunch of just-purchased daisies in hand. Even as her stunned, naked, and hopelessly misguided daughter was escaping destruction, she was consoling herself with the thought that the rich people who owned the house could "damn well afford to lose it."

What was unusual in Kathy Boudin's case is that unlike many of her more conventionally raised peers, she was no rebel; she learned her arrogance and rage at her mother's progressive breast. At Bryn Mawr, Kathy cursed the "self-indulgent rich-bitch girls." Underground, she despised all the "mothafuckas" working within the system—"anti-war draft counselors, activist lawyers like Leonard, and middle-class blacks." In an interview with Kathy years after the Brinks robbery, Braudy mentioned the name of the child of one of the murdered police officers. "Who?" Kathy asked. "Waverly Brown's son," Braudy explained. "Really?" she responded. "I never knew the guy had a son."

Kathy's uncle, I.F. Stone, famously described the Weathermen as "the most sensitive of a generation." By the end of Susan Braudy's compelling book, epithets of a far different sort come to mind for Kathy and her cohort, as for the entire morally corrupt world of the Boudin clan.

Odd Man Out

A National Party No More: The Conscience of a Conservative Democrat
by Zell Miller
Stroud & Hall. 237 pp. $26.00

Reviewed by
Josh Chafetz

LAST OCTOBER, long before it was clear who would receive the Democratic presidential nomination, Senator Zell Miller, Democrat from Georgia, made waves by endorsing President Bush's reelection bid. "This does not mean I am going to become a Republican," he said. "It simply means that in the year 2004, this Democrat will vote for George Bush."

But when "this Democrat" has co-sponsored the administration's tax cuts, attacked his party's filibusters of Bush's judicial nominees, opposed abortion, wholeheartedly supported the Iraq war, and written a best-selling book (this one) featuring dust-jacket blurbs from such right-wing stalwarts as Robert Novak, Jack Kemp, and Newt Gingrich, it is legitimate to wonder precisely what makes him a Democrat at all.

One answer lies in Miller's past: "I was born a Democrat. . . . To change would be like walking on my mother's grave." Miller's father died in 1932, two weeks after Zell was born; he was raised by his mother in the town of Young Harris, Georgia, population 300. After junior college and a stint in the Marines, Miller began his political ascent: a member of the county's Democratic executive committee at twenty-six while earning a graduate degree in history; mayor of Young Harris at twenty-six; a state senator at twenty-eight; followed by election to the office of lieutenant governor and then governor; followed by appointment to the U.S. Senate upon the death of Paul Coverdell in 2000. Miller, now seventy-one, has announced he will not run for reelection when his term ends in 2005.

As governor, Miller was immensely popular. He balanced Georgia's budget while cutting taxes. He reformed the state's welfare system, clamping down on Medicaid fraud, slashing the welfare rolls in half, and saving millions for his state. He increased the state's prison capacity and implemented a "two-strikes-and-you're-out" policy for violent felons. He funded educational programs with lottery receipts, increasing teacher salaries, creating adult-literacy programs, and introducing "HOPE" scholarships that enable any student graduating from a Georgia public or private high school with at least a B average to receive free tuition plus a book allowance to attend any public college in the state (those attending in-state private institutions receive $3,000 per year).

AFTER SINGING the praises of his own record, Miller spends the remainder of *A National Party No More* talking about the issues near to his heart, on which his stances mostly come straight out of the Republican playbook. Addressing his party's use

JOSH CHAFETZ, *a new contributor, is co-editor of oxblog.com and a graduate student in politics at Merton College, Oxford.*

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of the filibuster to block some of President Bush's judicial nominations, he complains that it "hijacks the democratic process." He argues against our national "orgy of taxation." He laments abortion and even expresses his hope that "someday *Roe* v. *Wade* will be reversed." He waxes lyrical about the cultural value of guns and hunting, and scorns those who would take guns from law-abiding citizens. He supports the war on terrorism and the war on Iraq. He finds the idea of amnesty for illegal aliens absurd, and calls for their immediate deportation. And he favors broad reform of the criminal-justice system, arguing for the death penalty and decrying the fact that "criminals have more than two-dozen rights under the Constitution and crime victims have zero."

Unsurprisingly, in light of these views, Miller also spends a great deal of time taking his fellow Democrats to task. He believes that, in their choice of issues, their intolerance of disagreement, and their surrender of policy decisions to liberal special-interest groups, Democratic leaders have told the South to "go to hell." Indeed, a "values gap" has opened between the Democratic leadership and the South; as a result, the Democrats are no longer a national party, and they are doomed to a slow death.

Or perhaps, this coming November, a fast death. Miller reserves his choicest vitriol for the current crop of Democratic presidential contenders—"streetwalkers in skimpy halters and hot pants plying their age-old trade for the fat wallets on 'K' Street." Chief among the targets of his ire is Howard Dean, who "belongs to the whining wing of the Democratic Party."

As POLITICAL books go, this one is a mixed bag. The autobiographical passages hold some interest: gaining an acquaintanceship with "mountain logic" or "small-town pragmatism"—the words used by Miller to describe his political philosophy—is certainly useful for anyone aspiring to understand the political currents flowing through the American South. Equally valuable to the same end are Miller's reflections on his own political evolution, including his much-regretted opposition to the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which he says has "tormented [him] ever since."

And Miller's political analysis is often perceptive: he is surely right that a deep cultural divide has opened up between the South and the Democratic party, especially the party's ascendant left wing. And he is also right that the South is slipping further and further from the Democrats' grasp.

But as in many political books, the author of this one cannot decide whether he wants to be erudite or folksy: a reader could get whiplash moving back and forth between quotations from Albert Einstein and Willie Nelson, Omar Khayyam and Tammy Wynette. There are also errors, petty and grand. One might forgive Miller for misspelling the occasional name (Tom Harkin and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, to take two examples). But a sitting U.S. Senator with degrees in history and political science should not misstate the number of constitutional amendments (there are 27, not 22) or misquote the Declaration of Independence (the signers pledged "our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor," not "our lives, future, and sacred honor").

In the end, however, the book's largest failure is its inability to explain why exactly Zell Miller remains a Democrat. As he notes repeatedly throughout, he is significantly to the Right of the party, and not just on a few issues but on almost all of them. In fact, even if as recently as a decade ago it would have been possible to find Democrats of national stature as conservative or almost as conservative as he, today one cannot name any.

This is not just a matter of idle curiosity; it has real political ramifications. In 2001, after James Jeffords of Vermont defected from Republican

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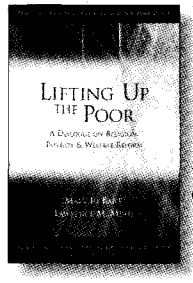

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ranks, control of the Senate switched from the GOP to the Democrats. Had Miller defected in turn, control would have shifted back, and the agenda for which he argues so passionately would have stood a better chance of being enacted.

So why did he not make the switch? Was it because he was "born a Democrat," and changing parties would be "like walking on my mother's grave"? If so, then what is he doing endorsing President Bush? A Montague cannot become a Capulet—but he can side with the Capulets in a fight against the Montagues?

Perhaps the simple if slightly cynical answer is that if Zell Miller were a Republican, he would not stand out. As practically the only remaining conservative Democrat, he is the odd man out, ardently courted by the Republican Senate leadership and President Bush when they need his vote, and sufficiently in the limelight to be in a position to write a best-selling book. And that may be the saddest comment of all on what has become of the Democratic party in our time.

Chapter & Verse

W.B. Yeats: A Life
Volume II: The Arch-Poet, 1915-1939
by R.F. Foster
Oxford. 798 pp. $45.00

Reviewed by
Stephen Barbara

W. H. AUDEN was being charitable when he said that William Butler Yeats, by common consent one of the greatest poets if not the greatest poet of the 20th century, was "silly like us." Affected, credulous, obsessed with the occult, politically reactionary, and often downright foolish, Yeats was unlike anybody; and he was not so much silly as half-mad.

Roy Foster, a professor of Irish history at Oxford, has written the most recent and perhaps the most ambitious biography of Yeats, a scholarly two-volume work of about 1,400 pages in all. Foster is also an authorized biographer, and has thus had access to more information than anyone before him. This he has tried to organize between four covers.

In the introduction to the first volume, *The Apprentice Mage* (1997), Foster bluntly explained his approach to his subject: "Most biographical studies of [Yeats] are principally about what he wrote; this one is principally about what he did." By giving just the facts, in chronological order, he would, he suggested, avoid woolly literary speculation and cloudy psychologizing at once. And the facts assembled by Foster in that first volume did indeed show the unfolding development of a day-dreaming young poet into a confident man of letters—without, however, acknowledging the essential, abiding mysteriousness of the process.

In this newly released second volume, Foster covers Yeats's much more interesting late years from 1915 to 1939. Here once again his approach is to shadow the facts closely. Moving year by year, he tells us what Yeats was reading and writing, who his mistresses were, where he was traveling, and so forth. Throughout, he emphasizes actions rather than the poet's inner life or work.

AT THE start of the book, in 1915, Yeats is a fifty-year-old bachelor anxious to marry and start a family. Since the age of twenty-three, he had been in love with Maud Gonne, a zealous political activist of independent means. Unfortunately, Gonne had declined to return his sentiments. An art-hating ideologue, she was, to say the least, an incompatible choice for Yeats, although her cryptic snubs did inspire

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many of his most romantic poems. In 1916, he proposed marriage, not for the first time, and was once again refused. Soon thereafter his thoughts turned to Maud's daughter Iseult, then an introspective and troubled girl of twenty-one (she had been molested by her father). Unsure of her feelings, she, too, turned him down.

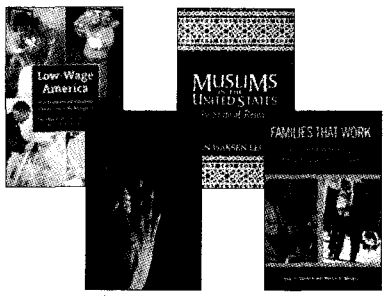
Undeterred, Yeats now proposed for the third time that year—to Georgie Hyde Lees, a sensible girl of twenty-four from a well-to-do family. Although he was not in love with her, he thought of Georgie as a kind, considerate woman, and an added bonus was that she shared his interest in the occult. At the start of their honeymoon, suffering pangs of remorse, Yeats luckily discovered that Georgie had a facility for "automatic writing"—i.e., retrieving messages from the spirit world; the ardent nature of the messages that issued from her pen (with his solicitous help) seem to have saved the honeymoon.

Foster tries hard to keep a straight face in writing about Georgie and Yeats's occult activities. Like many middle-aged women of the era, Yeats appears to have consulted the spirit world less for metaphysical knowledge than for humdrum advice. In a typical session, he would instruct Georgie to inquire what the spirits wanted him to do that day; most often, they suggested a little more action in the bedroom. The technique, perhaps deserving of revival in an advice column today, did a great deal to make their marriage a happy one.

If Yeats's private life was busy in these years, so too was his political life. Born of an Irish Protestant family, many of whose members had been staunch unionists and partisans of the British Empire, he came to favor Irish independence and made friends with nationalists. These were famously divided between advocates of violent revolution and supporters of a "home rule" bill to be wrung from the British parliament. Yeats, who was nonviolent by nature, favored the parliamentary route. His nationalist passions were in any case focused mainly on creating a distinctly Irish literature—a project to which he contributed poems and plays, often not his best, drawing on Irish folklore and myth (*The Wanderings of Oisin*, for example)—and strong cultural institutions like the Irish Academy of Letters and the Abbey Theater.

But he was deeply shaken by Britain's cruel response to the 1916 Easter Rising—a nationalist sedition that began with the seizure of a few administrative buildings in Dublin and ended with the capture and wholesale execution of the plotters, many of whom Yeats had known. The episode inspired one of his most famous poems, "Easter 1916," with its even more famous lines: "All changed, changed utterly / A terrible beauty is born."

SOCIAL SCIENCE THAT MATTERS



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Years later, when 26 counties of Ireland were granted independence from Britain, Yeats was given an honorary appointment to the senate of the new Irish Free State. During his term, he earned a reputation as a liberal in artistic matters, battling with some success for the cause of intellectual freedom, and also acted the part of the worldly European, losing a tough fight with his provincial Catholic colleagues (whom, to complicate matters, he considered his social inferiors) over a proposed constitutional ban on divorce. But in his correspondence, in his lectures, and in his vision of the proper society—partly expressed in an ignorant work called, appropriately, *A Vision*—he gave free rein to his deep reactionary sympathies.

Foster does not hold Yeats's opinions against him, however indefensible some of them now seem. He was, for example, a supporter of eugenics, and he was also an odious snob, at one time writing a song with the lyrics, "What's equality—muck in the yard:/ Historic Nations grow/ From above to below." Indeed, he never had much use for liberal democracy, declaring in a speech to undergraduates during a visit to the United States that "I would go back to the Middle Ages, to the time of Thomas Aquinas."

In his great poem "The Second Coming" (1919), Yeats foresaw that a violent new ideology—fascism—might come to crush democracy, a premonition for which in retrospect he has been given enormous credit. But George Orwell, for one, thought that, given the choice, Yeats might have preferred fascism to democracy. In light of his social attitudes and his admiration for Mussolini, it is certainly possible. Happily, he managed to keep free of political parties for the remainder of his years.

No matter how busy his public life, Yeats the private man always pops back before us in Foster's pages. We see him as a white-haired libertine, paunchy, impotent, but enjoying a radiant "second puberty" as he chases after younger women and generally makes an ass of himself. In 1934, nearing seventy, he eagerly underwent the "Steinach operation," a medical procedure promising "sexual rejuvenation" that in fact was no more than a vasectomy. In Yeats, it inspired some lurid dalliances with young beauties like Ethel Mannin and Margot Ruddock, affairs that were condoned by Georgie though they made Yeats a more distant and detached father. Three of his mistresses stood vigil by his deathbed in 1939.

THIS VOLUME is titled *The Arch Poet*, but (as my brief summary suggests) its main focus is elsewhere than on Yeats's poetry. That is a shame, for if Yeats was more than a poet, he was at his best as a poet, and in the final two decades of his

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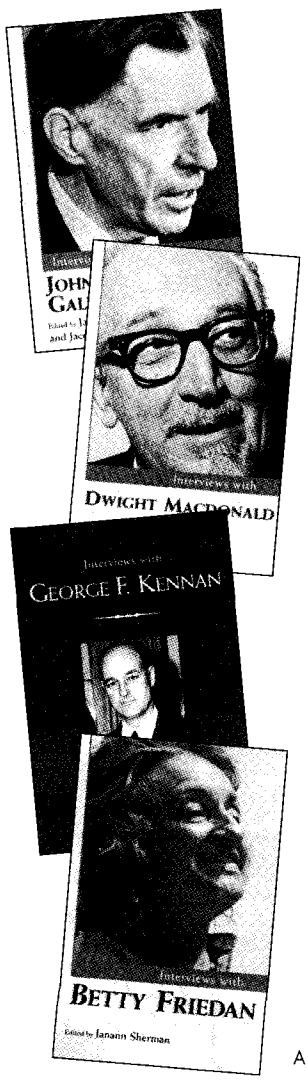

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life he published collections that ensure his immortality: *The Tower*, *The Winding Stair*, and *Parnell's Funeral*. These are major works, the poems full of imaginative force, inspired imagery, elegant rhythms, astonishing and profound turns of phrase. One of my favorites, "What Then?," expresses Yeats's despair at old age:

> All his happier dreams came true—
> A small old house, wife, daughter, son,
> Grounds where plum and cabbage grew,
> Poets and Wits about him drew;
> *"What then?" sang Plato's ghost, "what then?"*

In addition to delicately rueful lyrics like this one, the later Yeats wrote explicitly political verse ("Come Gather Round Me Parnellites"), poems featuring odd personae ("The Lady's First Song"), searching metaphysical meditations ("Among School Children"), and further verse reworkings of Irish myths (as in "Cuchulain Comforted").

Foster, who is far from being a literary critic, dutifully places the late collections in context, briskly summarizing their contents and quoting liberally. By sticking loyally to his historical method, he successfully avoids a number of longstanding literary quarrels, including over the question of whether even Yeats's best poems are rendered somehow imperfect by his tendency to use inflated or affected language.

Affectation, at any rate, is one fault that Foster regrettably shares with his subject. Both volumes of this biography are marred by his habit of sprinkling his prose with Latin and especially French ornaments, so that whole pages dissolve in terms and phrases like *faits accomplis*, *déclassé*, *ci-devant*, *demi-mondaines*, *de haut en bas*. As for Foster's English, it is serviceable enough, though it can run to the turgid and the academic, favoring farfetched terms and circumlocutions over simple nouns and active verbs.

A more pressing issue is whether these books help make Yeats less mysterious as a man and a poet. A very short answer would be that they do, by sheer dint of the many facts they reveal about his life. But the lamentable thing is how little Foster does to evaluate or interpret those facts. Yeats was a complex genius, and the facts do not speak for themselves.

True, Foster does not commit the sin of most Yeats biographers, which has been either to ignore or to explain away his subject's reactionary opinions, his pretensions, his credulous occultism, and his foolishness. It is, after all, precisely in these "silly" aspects of Yeats's character that one can begin to discern some broad connections among his life, his work, and his thought. But facts alone cannot draw those connections for us, even over the expanse of two large volumes.

Making Citizens

Reinventing the Melting Pot: The New Immigrants and What It Means to Be American
Edited by Tamar Jacoby
Basic. 320 pp. $27.50

Reviewed by
Jonathan Kay

Between 1880 and 1924, some 24 million immigrants arrived in the United States, most of them from the farms and shtetls of Southern and Eastern Europe. Poor as most of them were, the newcomers brought job skills, a strong work ethic, and a fierce loyalty to their adopted homeland. In time, their successful absorption would become enshrined in national lore, evidence of the transformative power of the American "melting pot."

Over the last four decades, the U.S. has again experienced a great wave of immigration. But many Americans fear—and some hope—that this batch of new arrivals will not melt so easily into the national mix. On the nativist Right, critics argue that immigration threatens America's language, common culture, and economic well-being. Former presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan warns that the melting pot "has been reduced to a simmer," and believes that only drastic cutbacks in numbers and an aggressive program of assimilation can ward off the country's Balkanization. Meanwhile, on the Left, many ethnic activists, especially among Hispanics, decry the very idea of assimilation. They see bilingual education and multiculturalism as a way to keep their own distinctive heritages alive and to keep white, English-speaking America at bay.

In *Reinventing the Melting Pot*, Tamar Jacoby, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute (and a contributor to Commentary), brings together the work of 21 writers who steer a course between these two poles. Most are academics, some are journalists, and all broadly endorse what might be called "soft" assimilationism—the view that immigrants should be encouraged to integrate, but at their own pace and on terms that allow them to retain some degree of distinctiveness. They also agree that the U.S. is not at risk of coming apart: immigrants are still eager to become Americans.

Though the world of identity politics was unknown to the immigrants of a hundred years ago, they were in many ways more politicized than their modern counterparts. In the days of Tammany Hall, machine politicians would sometimes personally greet the steamships, offering homes, food, coal, and employment to the newcomers in exchange

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Jonathan Kay *is the editorials editor of the* National Post *of Toronto.*

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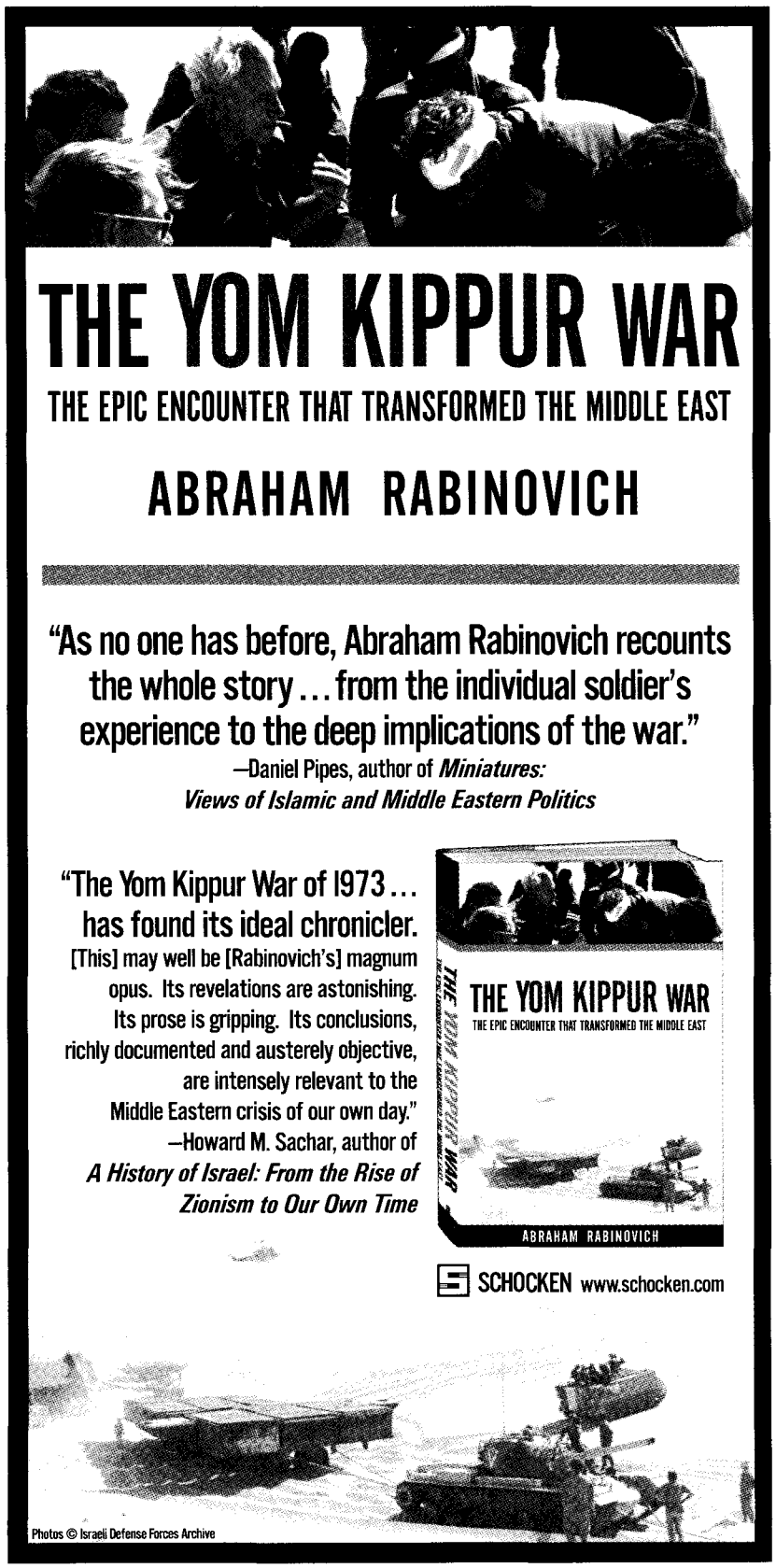
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for their votes. As the sociologist Herbert Gans writes here of New York City, "the Irish often got the police and fire departments, Eastern European Jews dominated public school teaching, and Italians took over sanitation." Elected offices were divvied up in a similar fashion, with each major ethnic group receiving a share of the slate.

By the time the great urban political machines disappeared in the middle of the 20th century, the children and grandchildren of foreign-born Russians, Poles, Greeks, Italians, and Irish were already competing successfully in the wider world of American society. With the explosion of the highway system and car culture, immigrants and their extended families began abandoning the cities for the suburbs. With the partial exception of the Jews, these groups let their ethnic identities melt away for all but ornamental purposes.

The second great wave, which began with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, brought newcomers from entirely different corners of the world, mostly from Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean. Moreover, the intellectual climate had changed. Their arrival coincided with the rise of the civil-rights movement, black power, and affirmative action, all of which encouraged immigrant leaders to present their constituents as aggrieved victims of white bigotry. For the first time, and especially among the intellectual class, the melting pot came to be seen as an evil.

This fashion for militant ethnic self-identification still survives on college campuses. But there is encouragingly little evidence that it has percolated down into the immigrant rank and file. As for intellectuals, their resistance to assimilation is, according to the social historian Stephen Steinberg, an ironic by-product of successful integration. "Assimilation breeds nostalgia," he writes:

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> First-generation immigrants, who are most authentically steeped in ethnic culture, tend to throw it away, often with both hands, as they pursue the opportunities that led them to come to America in the first place. Decades later, their largely assimilated children engage in desperate, but usually futile, efforts to recover the very culture that their parents relinquished.

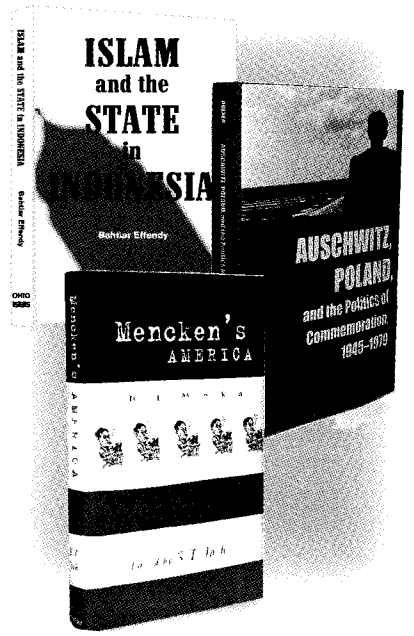
Indeed, the overall picture presented by *Reinventing the Melting Pot* is a hopeful one. Every major statistical indicator reviewed by the contributors—including English usage, intermarriage, and university attendance—suggests that today's immigrants are assimilating at least as quickly as their predecessors. Virtually all children of Hispanic immigrants speak English proficiently; by the third generation, observes Gregory Rodriguez of the New America Foundation, two-thirds of them speak only English. The sole systematic exception lies with black immigrants, who too often become trapped in a spiral of "downward assimilation" in poor African-American ghettoes.

But assimilation does not mean now what it meant a century ago. In the America of the first great migration, bald-faced bigotry was the norm, and many whites saw the newly arrived Europeans as inveterately stupid, filthy, and clannish. The purpose of assimilation—if, indeed, these huddled masses could be assimilated—was to strip them of every vestige of ethnicity, from food to language to dress. Even after World War II, when such prejudice became taboo, assimilation required the more or less rigid adoption of Wasp norms.

Thanks in part to globalization, Americans have in recent decades become far more comfortable with other cultures, and immigrants even carry a certain cachet in some circles. "The big bear coat I wore on the plane from Russia twenty years ago . . . is a dream down at the hip watering holes of Williamsburg, Brooklyn," writes Gary Shteyngart, a young Russian-American novelist who immigrated as a child. "The squid-and-noodle lunches that embarrassed my [Chinese] compatriots in [Manhattan's] Stuyvesant High School are now the stuff of fusion menus in overpriced SoHo restaurants."

If there is one area in which *Reinventing the Melting Pot* strikes a pessimistic note, it is on the economic front. Immigrants of a century ago came to America when its manufacturing sector was vibrant and worker-hungry. Even without a high-school education, they could get union jobs that permitted them to support their families and advance in the workplace. That age is long over, according to the economist George Borjas. Immigrants are now entering a knowledge economy in which education, not grit, is the currency of the realm. Asian computer programmers and entrepreneurs occupy the top portion of an "hourglass" pattern, with uneducated Latinos, Caribbean islanders, and Africans at the bottom, working dead-end jobs as busboys, fruit-pickers, and maids.

Since cultural assimilation goes hand in hand with education and economic advancement, Borjas warns, poorer immigrants will have an increasingly difficult time breaking out of their ethnic enclaves and integrating into American society. Eventually, they may form a permanent, half-assimilated ethnic underclass. To avoid this fate, he urges that the U.S. follow the lead of Canada and Australia by adjusting its immigration policies to deemphasize family ties and emphasize instead job skills, education, and English-language proficiency.



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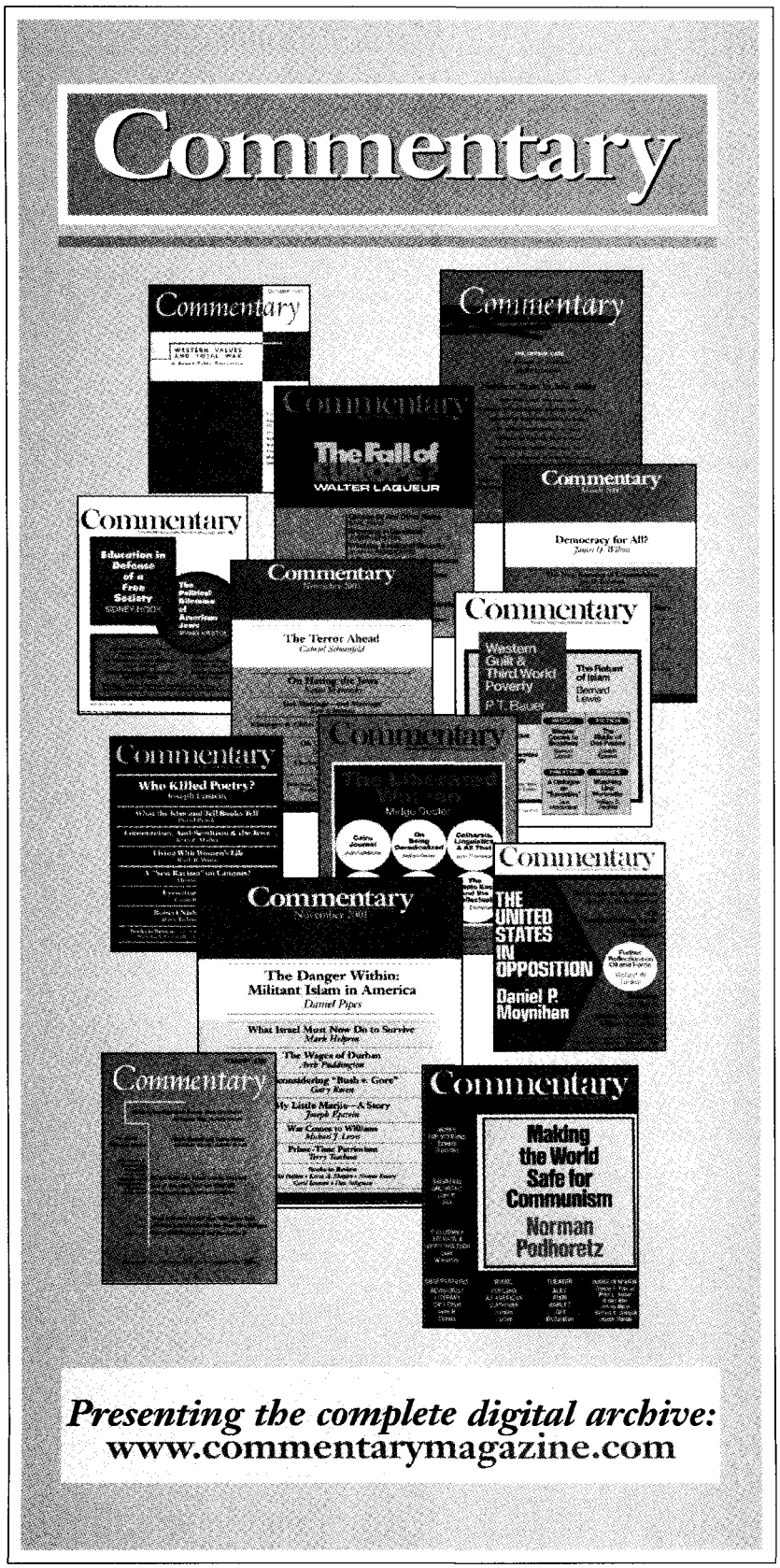

TAMAR JACOBY has produced a volume that will no doubt take its place on college reading lists as a leading primer on immigration trends. It is a useful and deeply informed—if at times somewhat dry and academic—counterpoint to the extremes that often dominate the immigration debate.

But this strength also points to the chief failing of *Reinventing the Melting Pot*. Since the essays all adhere roughly to Jacoby's sensible centrist position—at once pro-assimilation and pro-diversity—they often bleed into one another, and even tend to cite the same sources. In general, the views of nativists and multiculturalists are not so much discussed as mentioned in passing, as obstacles to be overcome on the path to enlightenment.

But can these dissenters be dismissed so lightly? Spokesmen for the Buchananite Right may go off the deep end in their predictions of social and cultural disintegration, but they are correct, by and large, when they argue that competition from low-skilled immigrants—particularly illegal migrants from Mexico—has depressed wages for less educated native-born workers. Of the authors in *Reinventing the Melting Pot*, only Borjas confronts this problem in a rigorous way. As for the advocates of ethnic separatism, their influence may be limited, but it is hardly benign. Hispanics may be learning English, as we discover from the sunny poll data cited in this book, but would they be learning it better—and faster—without bilingual education and the whole apparatus of multiculturalism?

Grappling more directly with the most contentious and difficult questions in the immigration debate would have enlivened *Reinventing the Melting Pot*. It might also have changed the minds of some who are not already part of the consensus that this valuable collection represents.

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Charity Drive

Rambam's Ladder:
A Meditation on Generosity
And Why It Is Necessary
to Give
by Julie Salamon
Workman. 183 pp. $18.95

Reviewed By
Leslie Lenkowsky

Unlike most Americans on September 11, 2001, Julie Salamon felt no urge to help the victims of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. Instead, she writes here, her first impulse was to shield her own family from the horrors of that day. But this made her feel selfish, not least because she had been raised in a home where concern for others was given pride of place.

In an effort to understand her conflicting emotions, Salamon, a culture writer for the *New York Times*, has now produced a book that examines how and why people give of their time and money. It is presented as a "meditation" on the "eight degrees of almsgiving," part of the religious code developed in the 12th century by the great Jewish thinker Maimonides (or "Rambam," an acronym of his Hebrew name).

As we learn from Salamon, Maimonides regarded generosity as a virtue that, like other virtues, had to be properly developed and exercised to be of value. To show how this might be done, he drew on both biblical commandments and astute insights into the relationships between donors and recipients to develop a ranking of "almsgiving"—from its least to its most admirable type.

Thus, giving grudgingly—"with a frowning countenance"—Maimonides judges to be the most inferior form, since it is not done willingly. Giving "less than what is proper"—even with a smile—is only slightly better. Waiting to be asked to give is less than praiseworthy because it requires the giver to be courted and acknowledged. By contrast, giving anonymously ranks high, since the giver receives no recognition for his virtue. Giving that eliminates the need for future giving is most praiseworthy of all, since it enables the recipient to avoid having to "beg from other people."

While professing admiration for these principles, Salamon shows that adhering to them is no simple matter. In a series of chapters looking at each of the rungs of "Rambam's ladder" and applying it to the workings of philanthropy in the United States today, she finds that most of the donors, fund-raisers, and charities she encounters are stuck somewhere at or near the bottom.

Many Americans, for example, are impelled to give only because of tax deductions, while corporations often give only to foster good public-relations or to advance other business interests. Does that not make them, she wonders, the kind of "grudging donors" that are least worthy in Maimonides' scheme? Similarly, Salamon contrasts the charitable enthusiasm she finds in some foundations with the professional detachment she finds in others. "Accounting principles," she laments, too often outweigh compassion in deciding how much help to offer the poor. In other cases, the problem lies not on the disbursing but on the fund-raising end: some charities that rely on outside donors have turned "asking" into a fine art, relying on clever and elaborate tactics to draw in gifts.

As for the beneficiaries of all this largesse, Salamon deplores efforts by donors to discriminate between the deserving and the undeserving poor; this, she maintains, is at odds with Maimonides' injunction against exposing the needy to "humiliation." More in keeping with his guidance is assisting "strangers" or the needy in distant locales abroad, rather than confining one's charity to one's own schools and religious organizations or to recipients whom one knows personally. But such long-distance philanthropy, Salamon complains, accounts for only a small portion of what Americans give to charity every year.

In discussing gifts designed to help the poor become self-reliant, Salamon recalls her own efforts working with the homeless. Being generous to this population, she acknowledges, is complicated. She is skeptical, for example, that the Bowery Residents' Committee, a New York City charity where she has volunteered her time, will actually help homeless people enter the workforce. Most of the clients, she writes, are "too strung out, too mentally impaired, too unambitious."

Salamon also invokes her periodic contacts with a homeless man named David, who has camped out in her neighborhood. After first crossing the street to avoid him, she finds herself becoming increasingly concerned about his well-being. She gives him money and, eventually, a pair of slightly-used sneakers: actions that make her feel "genuinely happy" even though she knows they do nothing to help him rise above his condition.

Indeed, Salamon well recognizes that feeling good can be at odds with doing good: in the case of another homeless man about whom she writes here, gifts that made it easier for him to live on the street also hastened his demise. Yet she resists the conclusion that his benefactors should have tempered their compassion with some consideration of Rambam's principles of charity. To the contrary, at the end of her book she expresses hope that simple "caring" might assume an even larger role in gift-giving. Today's American donors, she finds, are not as altruistic as they imagine, lacking not only fidelity to Maimonides' principles

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but also an "awareness of our common humanity" and a "conscientiousness" in responding to need wherever it may be found.

THOUGH *Rambam's Ladder* is intended as a personal account and not a careful study of its subject, it is still hard to understand how Salamon could reach this conclusion. In 2002, Americans gave over $200 billion to charities—and far more than that if one factors in the value of volunteer time. This amount greatly exceeds that given in any other country. To be sure, the motivations behind American generosity are often mixed, combining self-interest with the desire to help the needy or improve communities. But whatever else September 11, 2001 demonstrated, it certainly showed that most Americans will instinctively reach for their checkbooks or will travel great distances to help whenever tragedies occur.

As Maimonides understood, however, caring is not the end but only one possible start of generosity. The real challenge lies in extending the boundaries of compassion beyond the natural human impulse of sympathy. His "eight degrees of almsgiving" were aimed at transforming sentiment into purpose, to show how giving could embody righteousness and not just simply express an emotional response to tragedy and need.

That this is difficult goes without saying. But that is the nature of moral codes, which require those who would adhere to them to wrestle with hard choices and, more than occasionally, to fall short. Helping the deserving rather than the undeserving poor may shame or even make matters worse for the latter in the short run, but it could well be more beneficial for all in the end. Sometimes, if gifts are to be made, it may be necessary for corporations to align their philanthropic activities with their business interests, or charities to invest heavily in fundraising appeals. Nor, finally, is the difficulty of attaining success a sufficient reason for falling back on "caring," or for not trying to help needy people like David become more self-reliant; the alternative may be much worse.

Giving out of a sense of care or compassion, as Salamon would have us more often do, is certainly simpler, and more immediately gratifying. But giving as a virtue, and as a discipline, is likely to be both more efficacious and more ennobling. So Maimonides suggests, and such, one hopes, will be the wisdom behind the enormous generosity Americans continue to display every year, with or without the stimulus of terrorist attacks.

We mourn the death of

Robert L. Bartley

1937-2003

A great editor, a longtime friend and contributor to COMMENTARY, an indomitable comrade-in-arms.

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Russell A. Berman is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and the Walter A. Haas Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University.

Rather than viewing European anti-Americanism solely in terms of current policy disputes, we must look at our deep-seated cultural differences. According to *Views of a Changing World,* a study conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, **Americans and West Europeans advocate very distinct philosophical stances, especially regarding matters of individual responsibility and the role of the state.**

Asked to evaluate the statement "Success in life is pretty much determined by forces outside our control," 32 percent of the Americans polled agreed, in contrast to 48 percent in England, 54 percent in France, 66 percent in Italy, and 68 percent in Germany. Less than a third of Americans view their lives as defined by external forces, implying that the majority see the world in terms of individual responsibility. Meanwhile, Europeans minimize individual responsibility and attribute much greater importance to outside forces. Whereas Europeans tend toward a deterministic worldview, Americans focus on individual freedom.

The survey also measured how public opinion chooses between two competing values: the value of the freedom of individuals to pursue goals without state interference and the value of a state guarantee that no one be in need. Fifty-eight percent of Americans, a significant majority, chose freedom from state interference as the most important goal. This result stands in stark contrast to Europe, where freedom earns support at dramatically lower rates: only 39 percent in Germany, 36 percent in France, 33 percent in England, and a paltry 24 percent in Italy. Whereas Americans are predisposed to understand their lives in terms of individual responsibility and reject greater state regulation, Europeans, by and large, take the opposite position: They view their lives in terms of larger social forces and expect the state to protect them from need—even at the price of a restriction of their freedom. No wonder current domestic politics in most European countries involves the difficult task of reforming firmly entrenched welfare-state systems.

Not surprisingly, **the cultural difference between Americans and Europeans has significant foreign policy ramifications**. The American worldview of individual responsibility underpins an insistence on national sovereignty. In contrast, Europeans—especially the French and the Germans—tend to support restraints on the power of individual states. The lesson they take away from the two world wars is that curbs should be placed on individual states to prevent them from pursuing selfish interests. As a result, European states are gradually ceding elements of their sovereignty to the superstate of the European Union. In contrast, the United States has repeatedly demonstrated its reluctance to cede such authority to international bodies.

This is the cultural basis for the debate over multilateralism and unilateralism. In practice, the difference is, of course, hardly absolute. Although European politicians insist on international cooperation, they typically continue to pursue national interests. Whereas the American leadership insists on the right to act independently, it has appealed repeatedly to the United Nations for support. Nonetheless, the significant differences in American and European worldviews are likely to cause political rifts long after the current battles, such as Iraq and Kyoto, have faded.

—Russell A. Berman

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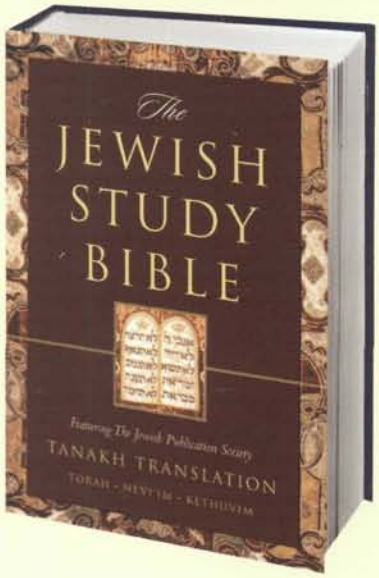

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